CECILIA,

OR

MEMOIRS

OF AN

HEIRESS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF EVELINA.

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IN FIVE VOLUMES.

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BRITISH
MUSEUM

CECILIA.

BOOK IX.

CHAPTER I.

A WRANGLING

MR. Monckton, the next day, as ſoon as breakfaſt was over, went out, to avoid ſhewing, even to Cecilia, the anxiety he felt concerning the regulation of her fortune, and arrangement of her affairs. He ſtrongly, however, adviſed her not to mention her large debt, which, though contracted in the innocence of the pureſt benevolence, would incur nothing but reproof and diſapprobation from all who only heard of it, when they heard of its inutility.

At eleven o'clock, though an hour before the time appointed, while Cecilia was ſitting in Lady Margaret's dreſſing-room, "with ſad civility and an aching head," ſhe was ſummoned to Mr. Briggs in the parlour,

He immediately began reproaching her with having eloped from him in the ſummer, and with the various expences ſhe had cauſed him from uſeleſs purchaſes and ſpoiled proviſions. He then complained of Mr. Delvile, whom he charged with defrauding him of his dues; but obſerving in the midſt of his railing, her dejection of countenance, he ſuddenly broke off, and looking at her with ſome concern, ſaid, "what's the matter, Ducky? a'nt well? look as if you could not help it."

"O yes," cried Cecilia, "I thank you, Sir, I am very well."

"What do look ſo blank for, then?" ſaid he, "hay? what are fretting for?—croſſed in love?—loſt your ſweetheart?"

"No, no, no," cried ſhe, with quickneſs.

"Never mind, my chick, never mind," ſaid he, pinching her cheek, with reſumed good humour, "more to be had; if one won't ſnap, another will; put me in a paſſion by going off from me with that old grandee, or would have got one long ago. Hate that old Don; uſed me very ill; wiſh I could trounce him. Thinks more of a fuſty old parchment than the price of ſtocks. Fit for nothing but to be ſtuck upon an old monument for a death's head."

He then told her that her accounts were all made out, and he was ready at any time to produce them; he approved much of her finiſhing wholly with the *old Don*, who had been a mere cypher in the executorſhip; but he

he adviſed her not to think of taking her money into her own hands, as he was willing to keep the charge of it himſelf till ſhe was married.

Cecilia, thanking him for the offer, ſaid ſhe meant now to make her acknowledgments for all the trouble he had already taken, but by no means purpoſed to give him any more.

He debated the matter with her warmly, told her ſhe had no chance to ſave herſelf from knaves and cheats, but by truſting to nobody but himſelf, and informing her what interest he had already made of her money, enquired how ſhe would ſet about getting more?

Cecilia, though prejudiced againſt him by Mr. Monckton, knew not how to combat his arguments, yet conſcious that ſcarce any part of the money to which he alluded was in fact her own, ſhe could not yield to them. He was, however, ſo ſtubborn and ſo difficult to deal with, that ſhe at length let him talk without troubling herſelf to anſwer, and privately determined to beg Mr. Monckton would fight her battle.

She was not, therefore, diſpleaſed by his interruption, though very much ſurpriſed by the ſight of his perſon, when, in the midſt of Mr. Briggs's oratory, Mr. Hobſon entered the parlour.

"I aſk pardon, ma'am," cried he, "if I intrude; but I made free to call upon the account of two ladies that are acquaintances of

yours, that are quite, as one may ſay, at their wit's ends."

"What is the matter with them, Sir?"

"Why, ma'am, no great matter, but mothers are ſoon frightened, and when once they are upon the fret, one may as well talk to the boards! they know no more of reaſoning and arguing, than they do of a ſhop ledger! however, my maxim is this; every body in their way; one has no more right to expect courageouſneſs from a lady in them caſes, than one has from a child in arms; for what I ſay is, they have not the proper uſe of their heads, which makes it very excuſable."

"But what has occaſioned any alarm? nothing, I hope, is the matter with Miſs Belfield?"

"No, ma'am; thank God, the young lady enjoys her health very well: but ſhe is taking on juſt in the ſame way as her mamma, as what can be more natural? Example, ma'am, is apt to be catching, and one lady's crying makes another think ſhe muſt do the ſame, for a little thing ſerves for a lady's tears, being they can cry at any time: but a man is quite of another nature; let him but have a good conſcience, and be clear of the world, and I'll engage he'll not waſh his face without ſoap! that's what I ſay!"

"Will, will!" cried Mr. Briggs, "do it myſelf! never uſe ſoap; nothing but waſte; take a little ſand; does as well."

"Let

"Let every man have his own propoſal;" anſwered Hobſon; "for my part, I take every morning a large bowl of water, and ſouſe my whole head in it; and then when I've rubbed it dry, on goes my wig, and am quite freſh and agreeable; and then I take a walk in Tottenham-Court Road as far as the Tabernacle, or thereabouts, and ſnuff in a little freſh country air, and then I come back, with a good wholeſome appetite, and in a fine breathing heat, aſking the young lady's pardon; and I enjoy my pot of freſh tea, and my round of hot toaſt and butter, with as good a reliſh as if I was a prince."

"Pot of freſh tea!" cried Briggs, "bring a man to ruin; toaſt and butter! never ſuffer it in my houſe. Breakfaſt on water-gruel, ſooner done; fills one up in a ſecond. Give it my ſervants; can't eat much of it, bob 'em there!" nodding ſignificantly.

"Water-gruel!" exclaimed Mr. Hobſon, "why I could not get it down if I might have the world for it! it would make me quite ſick, aſking the young lady's pardon, by reaſon I ſhould always think I was preparing for the ſmall-pox. My notion is quite of another nature; the firſt thing I do is to have a good fire; for what I ſay is this, if a man is cold in his fingers, its odds if ever he gets warm in his purſe! ha! ha! *warm*, you take me, Sir! I mean a pun. Though I ought to aſk par-

don, for I ſuppoſe the young lady don't know what I am a ſaying."

"I ſhould indeed be better pleaſed, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "to hear what you have to ſay about Miſs Belfield."

"Why, ma'am, the thing is this; we have been expecting the young 'Squire, as I call him, all the morning, and he has never come; ſo Mrs. Belfield, not knowing where to ſend after him, was of opinion he might be here, knowing your kindneſs to him, and that."

"You make the enquiry at the wrong place, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, much provoked by the implication it conveyed; "if Mr. Belfield is in this houſe, you muſt ſeek him with Mr. Monckton."

"You take no offence, I hope, ma'am, at my juſt aſking of the queſtion! for Mrs. Belfield crying, and being in that dilemma, I thought I could do no leſs than oblige her by coming to ſee if the young gentleman was here."

"What's this? what's this?" cried Mr. Briggs, eagerly; "who are talking of? hay? —who do mean? is this the ſweet-heart? eh, Duck?"

"No, no, Sir," cried Cecilia.

"No tricks! won't be bit! who is it?— will know; tell me, I ſay!"

"*I'll* tell you, Sir," cried Mr. Hobſon; "it's a very handſome young gentleman, with as fine a perſon, and as genteel a way of behaviour,

behaviour, and withal, as pretty a manner of dreſſing himſelf, and that, as any lady need deſire. He has no great head for buſineſs, as I am told, but the ladies don't ſtand much upon that topic, being they know nothing of it themſelves."

"Has got the ready?" cried Mr. Briggs, impatiently; "can caſt an account? that's the point; can come down handſomely? eh?"

"Why as to that, Sir, I'm not bound to ſpeak to a gentleman's private affairs. What's my own, is my own, and what is another perſon's, is another perſon's; that's my way of arguing, and that's what I call talking to the purpoſe."

"Dare ſay he's a rogue! don't have him, chick. Bet a wager i'n't worth two ſhillings, and that will go for powder and pomatum; hate a plaiſtered pate; commonly a numſcull: love a good bob jerom."

"Why this is talking quite wide of the mark," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "to ſuppoſe a young lady of fortune would marry a man with a bob jerom. What I ſay is, let every body follow their nature; that's the way to be comfortable; and then if they pay every one his own, who's a right to call 'em to account, whether they wear a bob-jerom, or a pig-tail down to the calves of their legs?"

"Ay, ay," cried Briggs, ſneeringly, "or whether they ſtuff their gullets with hot rounds of toaſt and butter."

"And what if they do, Sir?" returned Hobſon, a little angrily; "when a man's got above the world, where's the harm of living a little genteel? as to a round of toaſt and butter, and a few oyſters, freſh opened, by way of a damper before dinner, no man need be aſhamed of them, provided he pays as he goes: and as to living upon water-gruel, and ſcrubbing one's fleſh with ſand, one might as well be a galley-ſlave at once. You don't underſtand life, Sir, I ſee that."

"Do! do!" cried Briggs, ſpeaking through his ſhut teeth; "you're out there! oyſters!—come to ruin, tell you! bring you to jail!"

"To jail, Sir?" exclaimed Hobſon, "this is talking quite ungenteel! let every man be civil; that's what *I* ſay, for that's the way to make every thing agreeable: but as to telling a man he'll go to jail, and that, it's tantamount to affronting him."

A rap at the ſtreet-door gave now a new relief to Cecilia, who began to grow very apprehenſive leſt the delight of ſpending money, thus warmly conteſted with that of hoarding it, ſhould give riſe to a quarrel, which, between two ſuch ſturdy champions for their own opinions, might lead to a concluſion rather more rough and violent than ſhe deſired to witneſs: but when the parlour-door opened, inſtead of Mr. Delvile, whom ſhe now fully expected, Mr. Albany made his entrance.

This

This was rather diſtreſſing, as her real buſineſs with her guardians made it proper her conference with them ſhould be undiſturbed: and Albany was not a man with whom a hint that ſhe was engaged could be riſked: but ſhe had made no preparation to guard againſt interruption, as her little acquaintance in London had prevented her expecting any viſitors.

He advanced with a ſolemn air to Cecilia, and, looking as if hardly determined whether to ſpeak with ſeverity or gentleneſs, ſaid, "once more I come to prove thy ſincerity; now wilt thou go with me where ſorrow calls thee! ſorrow thy charity can mitigate?"

"I am very much concerned," ſhe anſwered, "but indeed at preſent it is utterly impoſſible."

"Again," cried he, with a look at once ſtern and diſappointed, "again thou faileſt me? what wanton trifling! why ſhouldſt thou thus elate a worn-out mind, only to make it feel its lingering credulity? or why, teaching me to think I had found an angel, ſo unkindly undeceive me?"

"Indeed," ſaid Cecilia, much affected by this reproof, "if you knew how heavy a loſs I had perſonally ſuffered—"

"I do know it," cried he, "and I grieved for thee when I heard it. Thou haſt loſt a faithful old friend, a loſs which with every ſetting ſun thou may'ſt mourn, for the riſing ſun will never repair it! but was that a reaſon for

ſhunning the duties of humanity? was the ſight of death a motive for neglecting the claims of benevolence? ought it not rather to have haſtened your fulfilling them? and ſhould not your own ſuffering experience of the brevity of life, have taught you the vanity of all things but preparing for its end?"

"Perhaps ſo, but my grief at that time made me think only of myſelf."

"And of what elſe doſt thou think now?"

"Moſt probably of the ſame perſon ſtill!" ſaid ſhe, half ſmiling, "but yet, believe me, I have real buſineſs to tranſact."

"Frivolous, unmeaning, ever-ready excuſes! what buſineſs is ſo important as the relief of a fellow-creature?"

"I ſhall not, I hope, there," anſwered ſhe, with alacrity, "be backward; but at leaſt for this morning I muſt beg to make you my almoner."

She then took out her purſe.

Mr. Briggs and Mr. Hobſon, whoſe quarrel had been ſuſpended by the appearance of a third perſon, and who had ſtood during this ſhort dialogue in ſilent amazement, having firſt loſt their anger in their mutual conſternation, now loſt their conſternation in their mutual diſpleaſure: Mr. Hobſon felt offended to hear buſineſs ſpoken of ſlightly, and Mr. Briggs felt enraged at the ſight of Cecilia's ready purſe. Neither of them, however, knew which way to interfere, the ſtern gravity of Albany,

Albany, joined to a language too lofty for their comprehenſion, intimidating them both. They took, however, the relief of communing with one another, and Mr. Hobſon ſaid in a whiſper, "This, you muſt know, is, I am told, a very particular old gentleman; quite what I call a genius. He comes often to my houſe, to ſee my lodger Miſs Henny Belfield, though I never happened to light upon him myſelf, except once in the paſſage: but what I hear of him is this; he makes a practice, as one may ſay, of going about into people's houſes, to do nothing but find fault."

"Shan't get into mine!" returned Briggs; "promiſe him that! don't half like him; be bound he's an old ſharper."

Cecilia, mean time, enquired what he deſired to have.

Half a guinea, he anſwered.

"Will that do?"

"For thoſe who have nothing," ſaid he, "it is much. Hereafter, you may aſſiſt them again. Go but and ſee their diſtreſſes, and you will wiſh to give them every thing."

Mr. Briggs now, when actually between her fingers he ſaw the half guinea, could contain no longer; he twitched the ſleeve of her gown, and pinching her arm, with a look of painful eagerneſs, ſaid in a whiſper, "Don't give it! don't let him have it! chouſe him, chouſe him! nothing but an old bite!"

"Pardon

"Pardon me, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, in a low voice, "his character is very well known to me." And then, diſengaging her arm from him, ſhe preſented her little offering.

At this ſight, Mr. Briggs was almoſt outrageous, and loſing in his wrath, all fear of the ſtranger, he burſt forth with fury into the following outcries, "Be ruined! ſee it plainly; be fleeced! be ſtript! be robbed! won't have a gown to your back! won't have a ſhoe to your foot! won't have a rag in the world! be a beggar in the ſtreet! come to the pariſh! rot in a jail!—half a guinea at a time!—enough to break the Great Mogul!"

"Inhuman ſpirit of ſelfiſh parſimony!" exclaimed Albany, "repineſt thou at this loan, given from thouſands to thoſe who have worſe than nothing? who pay to-day in hunger for bread they borrowed yeſterday from pity? who, to ſave themſelves from the deadly pangs of famine, ſolicit but what the rich know not when they poſſeſs, and miſs not when they give?"

"Anan!" cried Briggs; recovering his temper from the perplexity of his underſtanding, at a diſcourſe to which his ears were wholly unaccuſtomed, "what d'ye ſay?"

"If to thyſelf diſtreſs may cry in vain," continued Albany, "if thy own heart reſiſts the ſuppliant's prayer, callous to entreaty, and

and hardened in the world, ſuffer, at leaſt, a creature yet untainted, who melts at ſorrow, and who glows with charity, to pay from her vaſt wealth a generous tax of thankfulneſs, that fate has not reverſed her doom, and thoſe whom ſhe relieves, relieve not her!"

"Anan!" was again all the wondering Mr. Briggs could ſay.

"Pray, ma'am," ſaid Mr. Hobſon to Cecilia, "if its no offence, was the gentleman ever a player?"

"I fancy not, indeed!"

"I aſk pardon, then, ma'am; I mean no harm; but my notion was, the gentleman might be ſpeaking ſomething by heart."

"Is it but on the ſtage, humanity exiſts?" cried Albany, indignantly; "Oh, thither haſten, then, ye monopolizers of plenty! ye ſelfiſh, unfeeling engroſſers of wealth, which ye diſſipate without enjoying, and of abundance, which ye waſte while ye refuſe to diſtribute! thither, thither haſte, if there humanity exiſts!"

"As to engroſſing," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, happy to hear at laſt a word with which he was familiar, "it's what I never approved myſelf. My maxim is this; if a man makes a fair penny, without any underhand dealings, why he has as much a title to enjoy his pleaſure as the Chief Juſtice, or the Lord Chancellor; and its odds but he's as happy

as

as a greater man. Though what I hold to be beſt of all, is a clear conſcience, with a neat income of two or three thouſand a year. That's my notion; and I don't think it's a bad one."

"Weak policy of ſhort-ſighted ignorance!" cried Albany, "to wiſh for what, if uſed, brings care, and if neglected, remorſe! have you not now beyond what nature craves? why then ſtill ſigh for more?"

"Why?" cried Mr. Briggs, who by dint of deep attention began now better to comprehend him, "why to buy in, to be ſure! ever hear of ſtocks, eh? know any thing of money?"

"Still to make more and more," cried Albany, "and wherefore? to ſpend in vice and idleneſs, or hoard in chearleſs miſery! not to give ſuccour to the wretched, not to ſupport the falling; all is for ſelf, however little wanted, all goes to added ſtores, or added luxury; no fellow-creature ſerved, nor even one beggar relieved!"

Glad of it!" cried Briggs, "glad of it; would not have 'em relieved; don't like 'em; hate a beggar; ought to be all whipt; live upon ſpunging."

"Why as to a beggar, I muſt needs ſay," cried Mr. Hobſon, "I am by no means an approver of that mode of proceeding; being I take 'em all for cheats; for what I ſay is this, what a man earns, he earns, and it's no man's buſineſs to enquire what

what he ſpends, for a free-born Engliſhman is his own maſter by the nature of the law, and as to his being a ſubject, why a Duke is no more, nor a Judge, nor the Lord High Chancellor, and the like of thoſe; which makes it tantamount to nothing, being he is anſwerable to nobody by the right of Magna Charter: except in caſes of treaſon, felony, and that. But as to a beggar, it's quite another thing; he comes and aſks me for money; but what has he to ſhow for it? what does he bring me in exchange? why a long ſtory that he i'n't worth a penny! what's that to me? nothing at all. Let every man have his own; that's my way of arguing."

"Ungentle mortals!" cried Albany, "in wealth exulting, exulting even in inhumanity! think you theſe wretched outcaſts have leſs ſenſibility than yourſelves? think you, in cold and hunger, they loſe thoſe feelings which even in voluptuous proſperity from time to time diſturb you? you ſay they are all cheats? 'tis but the niggard cant of avarice, to lure away remorſe from obduracy. Think you the naked wanderer begs from choice? give him your wealth and try."

"Sha'n't have a ſouſe!" cried Briggs, "Give him a whip! ſend him to Bridewell! nothing but a pauper; hate 'em; hate 'em all! full of tricks; break their own legs, put out their arms, cut off their fingers, ſnap their own ancles,—all for what? to get at the

the chink! to chouſe us of caſh! ought to be well flogged; have 'em all ſent to the Thames; worſe than the convicts."

"Poor ſubterfuge of callous cruelty! you cheat yourſelves to ſhun the fraud of others! and yet, how better do you uſe the wealth ſo guarded? what nobler purpoſe can it anſwer to you, than even a chance to ſnatch ſome wretch from ſinking? think leſs how *much* ye ſave, and more for *what*; and then conſider how thy full coffers may hereafter make reparation, for the empty catalogue of thy virtues."

"Anan!" ſaid Mr. Briggs, again loſt in perplexity and wonder.

"Oh, yet," continued Albany, turning towards Cecilia, "preach not here the hardneſs which ye practice; rather amend yourſelves than corrupt her; and give with liberality what ye ought to receive with gratitude!"

"This is not my doctrine," cried Hobſon; "I am not a near man, neither; but as to giving at that rate, it's quite out of character. I have as good a right to my own ſavings, as to my own gettings; and what I ſay is this, who'll give to *me?* let me ſee that, and it's quite another thing: and begin who will, I'll be bound to go on with him, pound for pound, or pence for pence. But as to giving to them beggars, it's what I don't approve; I pay the poor's rate, and that's

that's what I call charity enough for any man. But for the matter of living well, and ſpending one's money handſomely, and having one's comforts about one, why it's a thing of another nature, and I can ſay this for myſelf, and that is, I never grudged myſelf any thing in my life. I always made myſelf agreeable, and lived on the beſt. That's my way."

"Bad way too," cried Briggs, "never get on with it, never ſee beyond your noſe; won't be worth a plumb while your head wags!" then, taking Cecilia apart, "hark'ee, my duck," he added, pointing to Albany, "who is that Mr. Bounce, eh? what is he?"

"I have known him but a ſhort time, Sir; but I think of him very highly."

"Is he a *good* man? that's the point, is he a *good* man?"

"Indeed he appears to me uncommonly benevolent and charitable."

"But that i'n't the thing; is he *warm?* that's the point, is he *warm?*"

"If you mean *paſſionate*," ſaid Cecilia, "I believe the energy of his manner is merely to enforce what he ſays."

"Don't take me, don't take me," cried he, impatiently; "can come down with the ready, that's the matter; can chink the little gold boys? eh?"

"Why

"Why I rather fear not, by his appearance; but I know nothing of his affairs."

"What does come for? eh? come a courting?"

"Mercy on me, no!"

"What for then? only a ſpunging?"

"No, indeed. He ſeems to have no wiſh but to aſſiſt and plead for others."

"All fudge! think he i'n't touched? ay, ay; nothing but a trick! only to get at the chink: ſee he's as poor as a rat, talks of nothing but giving money; a bad ſign! if he'd got any, would not do it. Wanted to make us come down; warrant thought to bam us all! out there! a'n't ſo ſoon gulled."

A knock at the ſtreet-door gave now a new interruption, and Mr. Delvile at length appeared.

Cecilia, whom his ſight could not fail to diſconcert, felt doubly diſtreſſed by the unneceſſary preſence of Albany and Hobſon; ſhe regretted the abſence of Mr. Monckton, who could eaſily have taken them away; for though without ſcruple ſhe could herſelf have acquainted Mr. Hobſon ſhe had buſineſs, ſhe dreaded offending Albany, whoſe eſteem ſhe was ambitious of obtaining.

Mr. Delvile entered the room with an air ſtately and erect; he took off his hat, but deigned not to make the ſmalleſt inclination of his head, nor offered any excuſe to Mr. Briggs

Briggs for being paſt the hour of his appointment: but having advanced a few paces, without looking either to the right or left, ſaid, "as I have never acted, my coming may not, perhaps, be eſſential; but as my name is in the Dean's Will, and I have once or twice met the other executors mentioned in it, I think it a duty I owe to my own heirs to prevent any poſſible future enquiry or trouble to them."

This ſpeech was directly addreſſed to no one, though meant to be attended to by every one, and ſeemed proudly uttered as a mere apology to himſelf for not having declined the meeting.

Cecilia, though ſhe recovered from her confuſion by the help of her averſion to this ſelf-ſufficiency, made not any anſwer. Albany retired to a corner of the room; Mr. Hobſon began to believe it was time for him to depart, and Mr. Briggs thinking only of the quarrel in which he had ſeparated with Mr. Delvile in the ſummer, ſtood ſwelling with venom, which he longed for an opportunity to ſpit out.

Mr. Delvile, who regarded this ſilence as the effect of his awe-inſpiring preſence, became rather more complacent; but caſting his eyes round the room, and perceiving the two ſtrangers, he was viſibly ſurpriſed, and looking at Cecilia for ſome explanation, ſeemed

ſeemed to ſtand ſuſpended from the purpoſe of his viſit till he heard one.

Cecilia, earneſt to have the buſineſs concluded, turned to Mr. Briggs, and ſaid, "Sir, here is pen and ink: are you to write, or am I? or what is to be done?"

"No, no," ſaid he, with a ſneer, "give it t'other; all in our turn; don't come before his Grace the Right Honourable Mr. Vampus."

"Before whom, Sir?" ſaid Mr. Delvile, reddening.

"Before my Lord Don Pedigree," anſwered Briggs, with a ſpiteful grin, "know him? eh? ever hear of ſuch a perſon?"

Mr. Delvile coloured ſtill deeper, but turning contemptuouſly from him, diſdained making any reply.

Mr. Briggs, who now regarded him as a defeated man, ſaid exultingly to Mr. Hobſon, "what do you ſtand here for?—hay?—fall o' your marrowbones; don't ſee 'Squire High and Mighty?"

"As to falling on my marrowbones," anſwered Mr. Hobſon, "it's what I ſhall do to no man, except he was the King himſelf, or the like of that, and going to make me Chancellor of the Exchequer, or Commiſſioner of Exciſe. Not that I mean the gentleman any offence; but a man's a man, and for one man to worſhip another is quite out of law."

"Muſt,

"Muſt, muſt!" cried Briggs, "tell all his old grand-dads elſe; keeps 'em in a roll; locks 'em in a cloſet; ſays his prayers to 'em; can't live without 'em: likes 'em better than caſh!—wiſh had 'em here! pop 'em all in the ſink!"

"If your intention, Sir," cried Mr. Delvile, fiercely, "is only to inſult me, I am prepared for what meaſures I ſhall take. I declined ſeeing you in my own houſe, that I might not be under the ſame reſtraint as when it was my unfortunate lot to meet you laſt."

"Who cares?" cried Briggs, with an air of defiance, "what can do, eh? poke me into a family vault? bind me o' top of an old monument? tie me to a ſtinking carcaſe? make a corpſe of me, and call it one of your famous couſins?—"

"For heaven's ſake, Mr. Briggs," interrupted Cecilia, who ſaw that Mr. Delvile, trembling with paſſion, ſcarce refrained lifting up his ſtick, "be appeaſed, and let us finiſh our buſineſs!"

Albany now, hearing in Cecilia's voice the alarm with which ſhe was ſeized, came forward and exclaimed, "whence this unmeaning diſſention? to what purpoſe this irritating abuſe? O, vain and fooliſh! live ye ſo happily, laſt ye ſo long, that time and peace may thus be trifled with?"

"There,

"There, there!" cried Briggs, holding up his finger at Mr. Delvile, "have it now! got old Mr. Bounce upon you! give you enough of it; promiſe you that!"

"Reſtrain," continued Albany, "this idle wrath; and if ye have ardent paſſions, employ them to nobler uſes; let them ſtimulate acts of virtue, let them animate deeds of beneficence! O, waſte not ſpirits that may urge you to good, lead you to honour, warm you to charity, in poor and angry words, in unfriendly, unmanly debate!"

Mr. Delvile, who from the approach of Albany, had given him his whole attention, was ſtruck with aſtoniſhment at this addreſs, and almoſt petrified with wonder at his language and exhortations.

"Why I muſt own," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "as to this matter I am much of the ſame mind myſelf; for quarreling's a thing I don't uphold, being it advances one no way; for what I ſay is this, if a man gets the better, he's only where he was before, and if he gets worſted, why it's odds but the laugh's againſt him: ſo if I may make bold to give my verdict, I would have one of theſe gentlemen take the other by the hand, and ſo put an end to bad words. That's my maxim, and that's what I call being agreeable."

"Mr. Delvile, at the words *one of theſe gentlemen take the other by the hand*, looked ſcornfully upon Mr. Hobſon, with a frown that

that expreſſed his higheſt indignation, at being thus familiarly coupled with Mr. Briggs. And then, turning from him to Cecilia, haughtily ſaid, "Are theſe two perſons," pointing towards Albany and Hobſon, "waiting here to be witneſſes to any tranſaction?"

"No, Sir, no," cried Hobſon, "I don't mean to intrude, I am going directly. So you can give me no inſight, ma'am," addreſſing Cecilia, "as to where I might light upon Mr. Belfield?"

"Me? no!" cried ſhe, much provoked by obſerving that Mr. Delvile ſuddenly looked at her.

"Well, ma'am, well, I mean no harm; only I hold it that the right way to hear of a young gentleman, is to aſk for him of a young lady: that's my maxim. Come, Sir," to Mr. Briggs, "you and I had like to have fallen out, but what I ſay is this; let no man bear malice; that's my way: ſo I hope we part without ill blood?"

"Ay, ay;" ſaid Mr. Briggs, giving him a nod.

"Well, then," added Hobſon, "I hope the good-will may go round, and that not only you and I, but theſe two good old gentlemen will alſo lend a hand."

Mr. Delvile now was at a loſs which way to turn for very rage; but after looking at every one with a face flaming with fire, he ſaid to Cecilia, "If you have collected together

theſe perſons for the purpoſe of affronting me, I muſt beg you to remember I am not one to be affronted with impunity!"

Cecilia, half frightened, was beginning an anſwer that diſclaimed any ſuch intention, when Albany, with the moſt indignant energy, called out, "Oh pride of heart, with littleneſs of ſoul! check this vile arrogance, too vain for man, and ſpare to others ſome part of that lenity thou nouriſheſt for thyſelf, or juſtly beſtow on thyſelf that contempt thou nouriſheſt for others!"

And with theſe words he ſternly left the houſe.

The thunderſtruck Mr. Delvile began now to fancy that all the dæmons of torment were deſignedly let looſe upon him, and his ſurpriſe and reſentment operated ſo powerfully that it was only in broken ſentences he could expreſs either. "Very extraordinary!—a new method of conduct!—liberties to which I am not much uſed!—impertinences I ſhall not haſtily forget,—treatment that would ſcarce be pardonable to a perſon wholly unknown!—"

"Why indeed, Sir," ſaid Hobſon, "I can't but ſay it was rather a cut-up; but the old gentleman is what one may call a genius, which makes it a little excuſable; for he does things all his own way, and I am told it's the ſame thing who he ſpeaks to, ſo he can but find fault, and that."

"Sir,"

"Sir," interrupted the ſtill more highly offended Mr. Delvile, "what *you* may be told is extremely immaterial to *me*; and I muſt take the liberty to hint to you, a converſation of this eaſy kind is not what I am much in practice in hearing."

"Sir, I aſk pardon," ſaid Hobſon, "I meant nothing but what was agreeable; however, I have done, and I wiſh you good day. Your humble ſervant, ma'am, and I hope, Sir," to Mr. Briggs, "you won't begin bad words again?"

"No, no," ſaid Briggs, "ready to make up; all at an end; only don't much like *Spain*, that's all!" winking ſignificantly, "nor an't over fond of a *ſkeleton!*"

Mr. Hobſon now retired; and Mr. Delvile and Mr. Briggs, being both wearied and both in haſte to have done, ſettled in about five minutes all for which they met, after paſſing more than an hour in agreeing what that was.

Mr. Briggs then, ſaying he had an engagement upon buſineſs, declined ſettling his own accounts till another time, but promiſed to ſee Cecilia again ſoon, and added, "Be ſure take care of that old Mr. Bounce! cracked in the noddle; ſee that with half an eye! better not truſt him! break out ſome day: do you a miſchief!"

He then went away: but while the parlour-door was ſtill open, to the no little ſur-

priſe of Cecilia, the ſervant announced Mr. Belfield. He hardly entered the room, and his countenance ſpoke haſte and eagerneſs. "I have this moment, madam," he ſaid, "been informed a complaint has been lodged againſt me here, and I could not reſt till I had the honour of aſſuring you, that though I have been rather dilatory, I have not neglected my appointment, nor has the condeſcenſion of your interference been thrown away.

He then bowed, ſhut the door, and ran off. Cecilia, though happy to underſtand by this ſpeech that he was actually reſtored to his family, was ſorry at theſe repeated intruſions in the preſence of Mr. Delvile, who was now the only one that remained.

She expected every inſtant that he would ring for his chair, which he kept in waiting; but, after a pauſe of ſome continuance, to her equal ſurpriſe and diſturbance, he made the following ſpeech. "As it is probable I am now for the laſt time alone with you, ma'am, and as it is certain we ſhall meet no more upon buſineſs, I cannot, in juſtice to my own character, and to the reſpect I retain for the memory of the Dean, your uncle, take a final leave of the office with which he was pleaſed to inveſt me, without firſt fulfilling my own ideas of the duty it requires from me, by giving you ſome counſel relating to your future eſtabliſhment."

This

This was not a preface much to enliven Cecilia; it prepared her for ſuch ſpeeches as ſhe was leaſt willing to hear, and gave to her the mixt and painful ſenſations of ſpirits depreſſed, with pride alarmed.

"My numerous engagements," he continued, "and the appropriation of my time, already ſettled, to their various claims, muſt make me brief in what I have to repreſent, and ſomewhat, perhaps, abrupt in coming to the purpoſe. But that you will excuſe."

Cecilia diſdained to humour this arrogance by any compliments or conceſſions: ſhe was ſilent, therefore; and when they were both ſeated, he went on.

"You are now at a time of life when it is natural for young women to wiſh for ſome connection: and the largeneſs of your fortune will remove from you ſuch difficulties as prove bars to the pretenſions, in this expenſive age, of thoſe who poſſeſs not ſuch advantages. It would have been ſome pleaſure to me, while I yet conſidered you as my Ward, to have ſeen you properly diſpoſed of: but as that time is paſt, I can only give you ſome general advice, which you may follow or neglect as you think fit. By giving it, I ſhall ſatisfy myſelf; for the reſt, I am not reſponſible."

He pauſed; but Cecilia felt leſs and leſs inclination to make uſe of the opportunity by ſpeaking in her turn.

"Yet though, as I juſt now hinted, young women of large fortunes may have little trouble in finding themſelves eſtabliſhments, they ought not, therefore, to triſle when proper ones are in their power, nor to ſuppoſe themſelves equal to any they may chance to deſire."

Cecilia coloured high at this pointed reprehenſion; but feeling her diſguſt every moment encreaſe, determined to ſuſtain herſelf with dignity, and at leaſt not to ſuffer him to perceive the triumph of his oſtentation and rudeneſs.

"The propoſals," he continued, "of the Earl of Ernolf had always my approbation; it was certainly an ill-judged thing to neglect ſuch an opportunity of being honourably ſettled. The clauſe of the name was, to *him*, immaterial; ſince his own name half a century ago was unheard of, and ſince he is himſelf only known by his title. He is ſtill, however, I have authority to acquaint you, perfectly well diſpoſed to renew his application to you."

"I am ſorry, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, coldly, "to hear it."

"You have, perhaps, ſome other better offer in view?"

"No, Sir," cried ſhe, with ſpirit, "nor even in deſire."

"Am I, then, to infer that ſome inferior offer has more chance of your approbation?"

"There

"There is no reaſon, Sir, to infer any thing: I am content with my actual ſituation, and have, at preſent, neither proſpect nor intention of changing it."

"I perceive, but without ſurpriſe, your unwillingneſs to diſcuſs the ſubject; nor do I mean to preſs it: I ſhall merely offer to your conſideration one caution, and then relieve you from my preſence. Young women of ample fortunes, who are early independent, are ſometimes apt to preſume they may do every thing with impunity; but they are miſtaken; they are as liable to cenſure as thoſe who are wholly unprovided for."

"I hope, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, ſtaring, "this at leaſt is a caution rather drawn from my ſituation than my behaviour?"

"I mean not, ma'am, narrowly to go into, or inveſtigate the ſubject; what I have ſaid you may make your own uſe of; I have only to obſerve farther, that when young women, at your time of life, are at all negligent of ſo nice a thing as reputation, they commonly live to repent it."

He then aroſe to go, but Cecilia, not more offended than amazed, ſaid, "I muſt beg, Sir, you will explain yourſelf!"

"Certainly this matter," he anſwered, "muſt be immaterial to *me*: yet, as I have once been your guardian by the nomination of the Dean, your uncle, I cannot forbear making an effort towards preventing any in-

diſcretion: and frequent viſits to a young man——"

"Good God! Sir," interrupted Cecilia, "what is it you mean?"

"It can certainly, as I ſaid before, be nothing to *me*, though I ſhould be glad to ſee you in better hands: but I cannot ſuppoſe you have been led to take ſuch ſteps without ſome ſerious plan; and I would adviſe you, without loſs of time, to think better of what you are about."

Should I think, Sir, to eternity," cried Cecilia, "I could never conjecture what you mean!"

"You may not chooſe," ſaid he, proudly, "to underſtand me; but I have done. If it had been in my power to have interfered in your ſervice with my Lord Derford, notwithſtanding my reluctance to being involved in any freſh employment, I ſhould have made a point of not refuſing it: but this young man is nobody,—a very imprudent connection—"

"What young man, Sir?"

"Nay, *I* know nothing of him! it is by no means likely I ſhould: but as I had already been informed of your attention to him, the corroborating incidents of my ſervant's following you to his houſe, his friend's ſeeking him at your's, and his own waiting upon you this morning; were not well calculated to make me withdraw my credence to it."

"Is it, then, Mr. Belfield, Sir, concerning whom you draw theſe inferences, from circumſtances the moſt accidental and unmeaning!"

"It is by no means my practice," cried he, haughtily, and with evident marks of high diſpleaſure at this ſpeech, "to believe any thing lightly, or without even unqueſtionable authority; what once, therefore, I have credited, I do not often find erroneous. Miſtake not, however, what I have ſaid into ſuppoſing I have any objection to your marrying; on the contrary, it had been for the honour of my family had you been married a year ago: I ſhould not then have ſuffered the degradation of ſeeing a ſon of the firſt expectations in the kingdom upon the point of renouncing his birth, nor a woman of the firſt diſtinction ruined in her health, and broken for ever in her conſtitution."

The emotions of Cecilia at this ſpeech were too powerful for concealment; her colour varied, now reddening with indignation, now turning pale with apprehenſion; ſhe aroſe, ſhe trembled and ſat down, ſhe aroſe again, but not knowing what to ſay or what to do, again ſat down.

Mr. Delvile then, making a ſtiff bow, wiſhed her good morning.

"Go not ſo, Sir!" cried ſhe, in faltering accents; "let me at leaſt convince you of the miſtake with regard to Mr. Belfield—"

"My miſtakes, ma'am," ſaid he, with a contemptuous ſmile, "are perhaps not eaſily convicted: and I may poſſibly labour under others that would give you no leſs trouble; it may therefore be better to avoid any farther diſquiſition."

"No, not better," anſwered ſhe, again recovering her courage from this freſh provocation; "I fear no diſquiſition; on the contrary, it is my intereſt to ſolicit one."

"This intrepidity in a young woman," ſaid he, ironically, "is certainly very commendable; and doubtleſs, as you are your own miſtreſs, your having run out great part of your fortune, is nothing beyond what you have a right to do."

"Me!" cried Cecilia, aſtoniſhed, "run out great part of my fortune!"

"Perhaps that is another *miſtake!* I have not often been ſo unfortunate; and you are not then, in debt?"

"In debt, Sir?"

"Nay, I have no intention to enquire into your affairs. Good morning to you, ma'am."

"I beg, I entreat, Sir, that you will ſtop!—make me, at leaſt, underſtand what you mean, whether you deign to hear my juſtification or not."

"O, I am miſtaken, it ſeems! miſinformed, deceived; and you have neither ſpent more than you have received, nor taken up money of Jews? your minority has been clear

of

of debts? and your fortune, now you are of age, will be free from incumbrances?"

Cecilia, who now began to underſtand him, eagerly anſwered, "do you mean, Sir, the money which I took up laſt ſpring?"

"O, no, by no means; I conceive the whole to be a *miſtake!*"

And he went to the door.

"Hear me but a moment, Sir!" cried ſhe haſtily, following him; "ſince you know of that tranſaction, do not refuſe to liſten to its occaſion; I took up the money for Mr. Harrel; it was all, and ſolely for him."

"For Mr. Harrel, was it?" ſaid he, with an air of ſupercilious incredulity; "that was rather an unlucky ſtep. Your ſervant, ma'am."

And he opened the door.

"You will not hear me, then? you will not credit me?" cried ſhe, in the cruelleſt agitation.

"Some other time, ma'am; at preſent my avocations are too numerous to permit me."

And again, ſtiffly bowing, he called to his ſervants, who were waiting in the hall, and put himſelf into his chair.

CHAP. II.

A Suspicion.

CECILIA, was now left in a ſtate of perturbation that was hardly to be endured. The contempt with which ſhe had been treated during the whole viſit was nothing ſhort of inſult, but the accuſations with which it was concluded did not more irritate than aſtoniſh her.

That ſome ſtrange prejudice had been taken againſt her, even more than belonged to her connection with young Delvile, the meſſage brought her by Dr. Lyſter had given her reaſon to ſuppoſe: what that prejudice was, ſhe now knew, though how excited ſhe was ſtill ignorant; but ſhe found Mr. Delvile had been informed ſhe had taken up money of a Jew, without having heard it was for Mr. Harrel, and that he had been acquainted with her viſits in Portland-Street, without ſeeming to know Mr. Belfield had a ſiſter. Two charges ſuch as theſe, ſo ſerious in their nature, and ſo deſtructive of her character, filled her with horror and conſternation, and even ſomewhat ſerved to palliate his illiberal and injurious behaviour.

But

But how reports thus falſe and thus diſgraceful ſhould be raiſed, and by what dark work of ſlander and malignity they had been ſpread, remained a doubt inexplicable. They could not, ſhe was certain, be the mere rumour of chance, ſince in both the aſſertions there was ſome foundation of truth, however cruelly perverted, or baſely over-charged.

This led her to conſider how few people there were not only who had intereſt, but who had power to propagate ſuch calumnies; even her acquaintance with the Belfields ſhe remembered not ever mentioning, for ſhe knew none of their friends, and none of her own knew them. How, then, ſhould it be circulated, that ſhe "viſited often at the houſe?" how ever be invented that it was from her "attention to the young man?" Henrietta, ſhe was ſure, was too good and too innocent to be guilty of ſuch perfidy; and the young man himſelf had always ſhewn a modeſty and propriety that manifeſted his total freedom from the vanity of ſuch a ſuſpicion, and an elevation of ſentiment that would have taught him to ſcorn the boaſt, even if he believed the partiality.

The mother, however, had neither been ſo modeſt nor ſo rational; ſhe had openly avowed her opinion that Cecilia was in love with her ſon; and as that ſon, by never offering himſelf, had never been refuſed, her opinion had received

received no check of ſufficient force, for a mind ſo groſs and literal, to change it.

This part, therefore, of the charge ſhe gave to Mrs. Belfield, whoſe officious and loquacious forwardneſs ſhe concluded had induced her to narrate her ſuſpicions, till, ſtep by ſtep, they had reached Mr. Delvile.

But though able, by the probability of this conjecture, to account for the report concerning Belfield, the whole affair of the debt remained a difficulty not to be ſolved. Mr. Harrel, his wife, Mr. Arnott, the Jew, and Mr. Monckton, were the only perſons to whom the tranſaction was known, and though from five a ſecret, in the courſe of ſo many months, might eaſily be ſuppoſed likely to tranſpire, thoſe five were ſo particularly bound to ſilence, not only for her intereſt but their own, that it was not unreaſonable to believe it as ſafe among them all, as if ſolely conſigned to one. For herſelf, ſhe had revealed it to no creature but Mr. Monckton; not even to Delvile; though, upon her conſenting to marry him, he had an undoubted right to be acquainted with the true ſtate of her affairs; but ſuch had been the hurry, diſtreſs, confuſion, and irreſolution of her mind at that period, that this whole circumſtance had been driven from it entirely, and ſhe had, ſince, frequently blamed herſelf for ſuch want of recollection. Mr. Harrel, for a thouſand reaſons, ſhe was certain had never named it; and had the

the communication come from his widow or from Mr. Arnott, the motives would have been related as well as the debt, and ſhe had been ſpared the reproach of contracting it for purpoſes of her own extravagance. The Jew, indeed, was, to her, under no obligation of ſecrecy, but he had an obligation far more binding,—he was tied to himſelf.

A ſuſpicion now aroſe in her mind which made it thrill with horror; "Good God!" ſhe exclaimed, "can Mr. Monckton—"

She ſtopt, even to herſelf;—ſhe checked the idea;—ſhe drove it haſtily from her;—ſhe was certain it was falſe and cruel;—ſhe hated herſelf for having ſtarted it.

"No," cried ſhe, "he is my friend, the confirmed friend of many years, my well-wiſher from childhood, my zealous counſellor and aſſiſtant almoſt from my birth to this hour:—ſuch perfidy from him would not even be human!"

Yet ſtill her perplexity was undiminiſhed; the affair was undoubtedly known, and it only could be known by the treachery of ſome one entruſted with it; and however earneſtly her generoſity combated her riſing ſuſpicions, ſhe could not wholly quell them; and Mr. Monckton's ſtrange averſion to the Delviles, his earneſtneſs to break off her connection with them, occurred to her remembrance, and haunted her perforce with ſurmiſes to his diſadvantage.

That

That gentleman, when he came home, found her in this comfortleſs and fluctuating ſtate, endeavouring to form conjectures upon what had happened, yet unable to ſucceed, but by ſuggeſtions which one moment excited her abhorrence of him, and the next of herſelf.

He enquired, with his uſual appearance of eaſy friendlineſs, into what had paſſed with her two guardians, and how ſhe had ſettled her affairs. She anſwered without heſitation all his queſtions, but her manner was cold and reſerved, though her communication was frank.

This was not unheeded by Mr. Monckton, who, after a ſhort time, begged to know if any thing had diſturbed her.

Cecilia, aſhamed of her doubts, though unable to get rid of them, then endeavoured to brighten up, and changed the ſubject to the difficulties ſhe had had to encounter from the obſtinacy of Mr. Briggs.

Mr. Monckton for a while humoured this evaſion; but when, by her own exertion, her ſolemnity began to wear off, he repeated his interrogatory, and would not be ſatisfied without an anſwer.

Cecilia, earneſt that ſurmiſes ſo injurious ſhould be removed, then honeſtly, but without comments, related the ſcene which had juſt paſt between Mr. Delvile and herſelf.

No comments were, however, wanting to explain to Mr. Monckton the change of her behaviour: "I ſee," he cried, haſtily, "what you cannot but ſuſpect; and I will go myſelf to Mr. Delvile, and inſiſt upon his clearing me."

Cecilia, ſhocked to have thus betrayed what was paſſing within her, aſſured him his vindication required not ſuch a ſtep, and begged he would counſel her how to diſcover this treachery, without drawing from her concern at it a concluſion ſo offenſive to himſelf."

He was evidently, however, and greatly diſturbed; he declared his own wonder equal to her's how the affair had been betrayed, expreſſed the warmeſt indignation at the malevolent inſinuations againſt her conduct, and lamented with mingled acrimony and grief, that there ſhould exiſt even the poſſibility of caſting the odium of ſuch villainy upon himſelf.

Cecilia, diſtreſſed, perplexed, and aſhamed at once, again endeavoured to appeaſe him, and though a lurking doubt obſtinately clung to her underſtanding, the purity of her own principles, and the ſoftneſs of her heart, pleaded ſtrongly for his innocence, and urged her to deteſt her ſuſpicion, though to conquer it they were unequal.

"It is true," ſaid he, with an air ingenuous though mortified, "I diſlike the Delviles, and have always diſliked them; they appear

to

to me a jealous, vindictive, and inſolent race, and I ſhould have thought I betrayed the faithful regard I profeſſed for you, had I concealed my opinion when I ſaw you in danger of forming an alliance with them; I ſpoke to you, therefore, with honeſt zeal, thoughtleſs of any enmity I might draw upon myſelf; but though it was an interference from which I hoped, by preventing the connection, to contribute to your happineſs, it was not with a deſign to ſtop it at the expence of your character,—a deſign black, horrible, and diabolical! a deſign which muſt be formed by a dæmon, but which even a dæmon could never, I think, execute!"

The candour of this ſpeech, in which his averſion to the Delviles was openly acknowledged, and rationally juſtified, ſomewhat quieted the ſuſpicions of Cecilia, which far more anxiouſly ſought to be confuted than confirmed: ſhe began, therefore, to conclude that ſome accident, inexplicable as unfortunate, had occaſioned the partial diſcovery to Mr. Delvile, by which her own goodneſs proved the ſource of her defamation: and though ſomething ſtill hung upon her mind that deſtroyed that firm confidence ſhe had hitherto felt in the friendſhip of Mr. Monckton, ſhe held it utterly unjuſt to condemn him without proof, which ſhe was not more unable to procure, than to ſatisfy herſelf with

any

any reaſon why ſo perfidiouſly he ſhould calumniate her.

Comfortleſs, however, and tormented with conjectures equally vague and afflicting, ſhe could only clear him to be loſt in perplexity, ſhe could only accuſe him to be penetrated with horror. She endeavoured to ſuſpend her judgment till time ſhould develope the myſtery, and only for the preſent ſought to finiſh her buſineſs and leave London.

She renewed, therefore, again, the ſubject of Mr. Briggs, and told him how vain had been her effort to ſettle with him. Mr. Monckton inſtantly offered his ſervices in aſſiſting her, and the next morning they went together to his houſe, where, after an obſtinate battle, they gained a complete victory: Mr. Briggs gave up all his accounts, and, in a few days, by the active interference of Mr. Monckton, her affairs were wholly taken out of his hands. He ſtormed, and propheſied all ill to Cecilia, but it was not to any purpoſe; he was ſo diſagreeable to her, by his manners, and ſo unintelligible to her in matters of buſineſs, that ſhe was happy to have done with him; even though, upon inſpecting his accounts, they were all found clear and exact, and his deſire to retain his power over her fortune, proved to have no other motive than a love of money ſo potent, that to manage it, even for another, gave him a ſatisfaction he knew not how to relinquiſh.

Mr.

Mr. Monckton, who, though a man of pleaſure, underſtood buſineſs perfectly well, now inſtructed and directed her in making a general arrangement of her affairs. The eſtate which devolved to her from her uncle, and which was all in landed property, ſhe continued to commit to the management of the ſteward who was employed in his life-time; and her own fortune from her father, which was all in the ſtocks, ſhe now diminiſhed to nothing by ſelling out to pay Mr. Monckton the principal and intereſt which ſhe owed him, and by ſettling with her bookſeller.

While theſe matters were tranſacting, which, notwithſtanding her eagerneſs to leave town, could not be brought into ſuch a train as to permit her abſence in leſs than a week, ſhe paſſed her time chiefly alone. Her wiſhes all inclined her to beſtow it upon Henrietta, but the late attack of Mr. Delvile had frightened her from keeping up that connection, ſince however carefully ſhe might confine it to the daughter, Mrs. Belfield, ſhe was certain, would impute it all to the ſon.

That attack reſted upon her mind, in defiance of all her endeavours to baniſh it; the contempt with which it was made ſeemed intentionally offenſive, as if he had been happy to derive from her ſuppoſed ill conduct, a right to triumph over as well as reject her. She concluded, alſo, that Delvile would be informed of theſe calumnies, yet ſhe judged

his

his generoſity by her own, and was therefore convinced he would not credit them: but what chiefly at this time encreaſed her ſadneſs and uneaſineſs, was the mention of Mrs. Delvile's broken conſtitution and ruined health. She had always preſerved for that lady the moſt affectionate reſpect, and could not conſider herſelf as the cauſe of her ſufferings, without feeling the utmoſt concern, however conſcious ſhe had not wilfully occaſioned them.

Nor was this ſcene the only one by which her efforts to forget this family were defeated; her watchful monitor, Albany, failed not again to claim her promiſe; and though Mr. Monckton earneſtly exhorted her not to truſt herſelf out with him, ſhe preferred a little riſk to the keenneſs of his reproaches, and the weather being good on the morning that he called, ſhe conſented to accompany him in his rambles: only charging her footman to follow where-ever they went, and not to fail enquiring for her if ſhe ſtayed long out of his ſight. Theſe precautions were rather taken to ſatisfy Mr. Monckton than herſelf, who, having now procured intelligence of the former diſorder of his intellects, was fearful of ſome extravagance, and apprehenſive for her ſafety.

He took her to a miſerable houſe in a court leading into Piccadilly, where, up three pair of ſtairs, was a wretched woman ill in bed,

bed, while a large family of children were playing in the room.

"See here," cried he, "what human nature can endure! look at that poor wretch, diſtracted with torture, yet lying in all this noiſe! unable to ſtir in her bed, yet without any aſſiſtant! ſuffering the pangs of acute diſeaſe, yet wanting the neceſſaries of life!"

Cecilia went up to the bed ſide, and enquired more particularly into the ſituation of the invalid; but finding ſhe could hardly ſpeak from pain, ſhe ſent for the woman of the houſe, who kept a green grocer's ſhop on the ground floor, and deſired her to hire a nurſe for her ſick lodger, to call all the children down ſtairs, and to ſend for an apothecary, whoſe bill ſhe promiſed to pay. She then gave her ſome money to get what neceſſaries might be wanted, and ſaid ſhe would come again in two days to ſee how they went on.

Albany, who liſtened to theſe directions with ſilent, yet eager attention, now claſped both his hands with a look of rapture, and exclaimed, "Virtue yet lives,—and I have found her?"

Cecilia, proud of ſuch praiſe, and ambitious to deſerve it, chearfully ſaid, "where, Sir, ſhall we go now?"

"Home;" anſwered he, with an aſpect the moſt benign; "I will not wear out thy pity by rendering woe familiar to it."

Cecilia,

Cecilia, though at this moment more diſpoſed for acts of charity than for buſineſs or for pleaſure, remembered that her fortune however large was not unlimited, and would not preſs any farther bounty for objects ſhe knew not, certain that occaſions and claimants, far beyond her ability of anſwering, would but too frequently ariſe among thoſe with whom ſhe was more connected; ſhe therefore yielded herſelf to his direction, and returned to Soho Square.

Again, however, he failed not to call at the time ſhe had appointed for re-viſiting the invalid, to whom, with much gladneſs, he conducted her.

The poor woman, whoſe diſeaſe was a rheumatic fever, was already much better; ſhe had been attended by an apothecary who had given her ſome alleviating medicine; ſhe had a nurſe at her bed-ſide, and the room being cleared of the children, ſhe had had the refreſhment of ſome ſleep.

She was now able to raiſe her head, and make her acknowledgments to her benefactreſs; but not a little was the ſurpriſe of Cecilia, when, upon looking in her face, ſhe ſaid, "Ah, madam, I have ſeen you before!"

Cecilia, who had not the ſmalleſt recollection of her, in return deſired to know when, or where?

"When you were going to be married, madam, I was the pew-opener at ——— church."

Cecilia

Cecilia ſtarted with ſecret horror, and involuntarily retreated from the bed; while Albany with a look of aſtoniſhment exclaimed, "Married?—why, then, is it unknown?"

"Aſk me not!" cried ſhe, haſtily; "it is all a miſtake."

"Poor thing!" cried he, "this, then, is the ſtring thy nerves endure not to have touched! ſooner will I expire than a breath of mine ſhall make it vibrate! O, ſacred be thy ſorrow, for thou canſt melt at that of the indigent!"

Cecilia then made a few general enquiries, and heard that the poor woman, who was a widow, had been obliged to give up her office, from the frequent attacks which ſhe ſuffered of the rheumatiſm; that ſhe had received much aſſiſtance both from the Rector and the Curate of —— church, but her continual illneſs, with the largeneſs of her family, kept her diſtreſſed in ſpite of all help.

Cecilia promiſed to conſider what ſhe could do for her, and then giving her more money, returned to Lady Margaret's.

Albany, who found that the unfortunate recollection of the pew-opener had awakened in his young pupil a melancholy train of reflections, ſeemed now to compaſſionate the ſadneſs which hitherto he had reproved, and walking ſilently by her ſide till ſhe came to Soho-Square, ſaid in accents of kindneſs, "Peace light upon thy head, and diſſipate thy woes!" and left her.

"Ah,

"Ah when!" cried ſhe to herſelf, "if thus they are to be revived for-ever!"

Mr. Monckton, who obſerved that ſomething had greatly affected her, now expoſtulated warmly againſt Albany and his wild ſchemes; "You trifle with your own happineſs," he cried, "by witneſſing theſe ſcenes of diſtreſs, and you will trifle away your fortune upon projects you can never fulfil: the very air in thoſe miſerable houſes is unwholeſome for you to breathe; you will ſoon be infected with ſome of the diſeaſes to which you ſo incautiouſly expoſe yourſelf, and while not half you give in charity will anſwer the purpoſe you wiſh, you will be plundered by cheats and ſharpers till you have nothing left to beſtow. You muſt be more conſiderate for yourſelf, and not thus governed by Albany, whoſe inſanity is but partially cured, and whoſe projects are ſo boundleſs, that the whole capital of the Eaſt India Company would not ſuffice to fulfil them."

Cecilia, though ſhe liked not the ſeverity of this remonſtrance, acknowledged there was ſome truth in it, and promiſed to be diſcreet, and take the reins into her own hands.

There remained for her, however, no other ſatisfaction; and the path which had thus been pointed out to her, grew more and more alluring every ſtep. Her old friends, the

poor Hills, now occurred to her memory, and ſhe determined to ſee herſelf in what manner they went on.

The ſcene which this enquiry preſented to her, was by no means calculated to ſtrengthen Mr. Monckton's doctrine, for the proſperity in which ſhe found this little family, amply rewarded the liberality ſhe had ſhewn to it, and proved an irreſiſtible encouragement to ſimilar actions. Mrs. Hill wept for joy in recounting how well ſhe ſucceeded, and Cecilia, delighted by the power of giving ſuch pleaſure, forgot all cautions and promiſes in the generoſity which ſhe diſplayed. She paid Mrs. Roberts the arrears that were due to her, ſhe diſcharged all that was owing for the children who had been put to ſchool, deſired they might ſtill be ſent to it ſolely at her expence, and gave the mother a ſum of money to be laid out in preſents for them all.

To peform her promiſe with the pew-opener was however more difficult; her ill health, and the extreme youth of her children making her utterly helpleſs: but theſe were not conſiderations for Cecilia to deſert her, but rather motives for regarding her as more peculiarly an object of charity. She found ſhe had once been a clear-ſtarcher, and was a tolerable plain-work woman; ſhe reſolved, therefore, to ſend her into the country, where ſhe hoped to be able to get her

her ſome buſineſs, and knew that at leaſt ſhe could help her, if unſucceſsful, and ſee that her children were brought up to uſeful employments. The woman herſelf was enchanted at the plan, and firmly perſuaded the country air would reſtore her health. Cecilia told her only to wait till ſhe was well enough to travel, and promiſed, in the mean time, to look out ſome little habitation for her. She then gave her money to pay her bills, and for her journey, and writing a full direction where ſhe would hear of her at Bury, took leave of her till that time.

Theſe magnificent donations and deſigns, being communicated to Albany, ſeemed a renovation to him of youth, ſpirit, and joy! while their effect upon Mr. Monckton reſembled an annihilation of all three! to ſee money thus ſported away, which he had long conſidered as his own, to behold thoſe ſums which he had deſtined for his pleaſures, thus laviſhly beſtowed upon beggars, excited a rage he could with difficulty conceal, and an uneaſineſs he could hardly endure; and he languiſhed, he ſickened for the time, when he might put a period to ſuch romantic proceedings.

Such were the only occupations which interrupted the ſolitude of Cecilia, except thoſe which were given to her by actual buſineſs; and the moment her affairs were in ſo much forwardneſs that they could be managed by

letters, ſhe prepared for returning into the country. She acquainted Lady Margaret and Mr. Monckton with her deſign, and gave orders to her ſervants to be ready to ſet off the next day.

Mr. Monckton made not any oppoſition, and refuſed himſelf the ſatisfaction of accompanying her: and Lady Margaret, whoſe purpoſe was now anſwered, and who wiſhed to be in the country herſelf, determined to follow her.

CHAP. III.

A DISTURBANCE.

THIS matter being ſettled at breakfaſt, Cecilia, having but one day more to ſpend in London, knew not how to let it paſs without taking leave of Henrietta, though ſhe choſe not again to expoſe herſelf to the forward inſinuations of her mother; ſhe ſent her, therefore, a ſhort note, begging to ſee her at Lady Margaret's, and acquainting her that the next day ſhe was going out of town.

Henrietta returned the following anſwer.

To

To Miſs Beverley.

Madam,

My mother is gone to market, and I muſt not go out without her leave; I have run to the door at every knock this whole week in hopes you were coming, and my heart has jumpt at every coach that has gone through the ſtreet. Deareſt lady, why did you tell me you would come? I ſhould not have thought of ſuch a great honour if you had not put it in my head. And now I have got the uſe of a room where I can often be alone for two or three hours together. And ſo I ſhall this morning, if it was poſſible my dear Miſs Beverley could come. But I don't mean to be teaſing, and I would not be impertinent or encroaching for the world; but only the thing is, I have a great deal to ſay to you, and if you was not ſo rich a lady, and ſo much above me, I am ſure I ſhould love you better than any body in the whole world, almoſt; and now I dare ſay I ſhan't ſee you at all; for it rains very hard, and my mother, I know, will be ſadly angry if I aſk to go in a coach. O dear! I don't know what I can do! for it will half break my

heart, if my dear Miſs Beverley ſhould go out of town, and I not ſee her!

I am, Madam,
With the greateſt reſpectfulneſs,
Your moſt humble ſervant,
HENRIETTA BELFIELD.

This artleſs remonſtrance, joined to the intelligence that ſhe could ſee her alone, made Cecilia inſtantly order a chair, and go herſelf to Portland-Street: for ſhe found by this letter there was much doubt if ſhe could otherwiſe ſee her, and the earneſtneſs of Henrietta made her now not endure to diſappoint her, "She has much, cried ſhe, to ſay to me, and I will no longer refuſe to hear her; ſhe ſhall unboſom to me her gentle heart, for we have now nothing to fear from each other. She promiſes herſelf pleaſure from the communication, and doubtleſs it muſt be ſome relief to her. Oh, were there any friendly boſom, in which I might myſelf confide! — happier Henrietta! leſs fearful of thy pride, leſs tenacious of thy dignity! thy ſorrows at leaſt ſeek the conſolation of ſympathy,—mine, alas! fettered by prudence, muſt fly it!"

She was ſhewn into the parlour, which ſhe had the pleaſure to find empty; and, in an inſtant, the warm-hearted Henrietta was in her arms. "This is ſweet of you indeed," cried ſhe, "for I did not know how to aſk it,

it, though it rains ſo hard I could not have walked to you, and I don't know what I ſhould have done, if you had gone away and quite forgot me."

She then took her into the back parlour, which ſhe ſaid they had lately hired, and, as it was made but little uſe of, ſhe had it almoſt entirely to herſelf.

There had paſſed a ſad ſcene, ſhe told her, at the meeting with her brother, though now they were a little more comfortable; yet her mother, ſhe was ſure, would never be at reſt till he got into ſome higher way of life; "And, indeed, I have ſome hopes," ſhe continued, "that we ſhall be able by and by to do ſomething better for him; for he has got one friend in the world yet, thank God, and ſuch a noble friend!—indeed I believe he can do whatever he pleaſes for him,—that is, I mean, I believe if he was to aſk any thing for him, there's nobody would deny him. And this is what I wanted to talk to you about."—

Cecilia, who doubted not but ſhe meant Delvile, ſcarce knew how to preſs the ſubject, though ſhe came with no other view: Henrietta, however, too eager to want ſolicitation, went on.

"But the queſtion is whether we ſhall be able to prevail upon my brother to accept any thing, for he grows more and more unwilling to be obliged, and the reaſon is,

that being poor, he is afraid, I believe, people ſhould think he wants to beg of them: though if they knew him as well as I do, they would not long think that, for I am ſure he would a great deal rather be ſtarved to death. But, indeed, to ſay the truth, I am afraid he has been ſadly to blame in this affair, and quarrelled when there was no need to be affronted; for I have ſeen a gentleman who knows a great deal better than my brother what people ſhould do, and he ſays he took every thing wrong that was done, all the time he was at Lord Vannelt's."

"And how does this gentleman know it?"

"O, becauſe he went himſelf to enquire about it; for he knows Lord Vannelt very well, and it was by his means my brother came acquainted with him. And this gentleman would not have wiſhed my brother to be uſed ill any more than I ſhould myſelf, ſo I am ſure I may believe what he ſays. But my poor brother, not being a lord himſelf, thought every body meant to be rude to him, and becauſe he knew he was poor, he ſuſpected they all behaved diſreſpectfully to him. But this gentleman gave me his word that every body liked him and eſteemed him, and if he would not have been ſo ſuſpicious, they would all have done any thing for him in the world."

"You

"You know this gentleman very well, then?"

"O, no, madam!" ſhe anſwered, haſtily, "I don't know him at all! he only comes here to ſee my brother; it would be very impertinent for me to call him an acquaintance of mine."

"Was it before your brother, then, he held this converſation with you?"

"O, no, my brother would have been affronted with him, too, if he had! but he called here to enquire for him at the time when he was loſt to us, and my mother quite went down upon her knees to him to beg him to go to Lord Vannelt's, and make excuſes for him, if he had not behaved properly: but if my brother was to know this, he would hardly ſpeak to her again! ſo when this gentleman came next, I begged him not to mention it, for my mother happened to be out, and ſo I ſaw him alone."

"And did he ſtay with you long?"

"No, ma'am, a very ſhort time indeed; but I aſked him queſtions all the while, and kept him as long as I could, that I might hear all he had to ſay about my brother."

"Have you never ſeen him ſince?"

"No, ma'am, not once! I ſuppoſe he does not know my brother is come back to us. Perhaps, when he does, he will call."

"Do you wiſh him to call?"

"Me?" cried ſhe, bluſhing, "a little; —ſometimes I do;—for my brother's ſake."

"For your brother's ſake! Ah, my dear Henrietta! — but tell me,—or *don't* tell me if you had rather not,—did I not once ſee you kiſſing a letter? perhaps it was from this ſame noble friend?"

"It was not a letter, madam," ſaid ſhe, looking down, "it was only the cover of one to my brother."

"The cover of a letter only! — and that to your brother!—is it poſſible you could ſo much value it?"

"Ah, madam! *You*, who are always uſed to the good and the wiſe, who ſee no other ſort of people but thoſe in high life, *you* can have no notion how they ſtrike thoſe that they are new to!—but I who ſee them ſeldom, and who live with people ſo very unlike them—Oh, you cannot gueſs how ſweet to *me* is every thing that belongs to them! whatever has but once been touched by their hands, I ſhould like to lock up, and keep for ever! though if I was uſed to them, as you are, perhaps I might think leſs of them."

Alas! thought Cecilia, who by *them* knew ſhe only meant *him*, little indeed would farther intimacy protect you!

"We are all over-ready," continued Henrietta, "to blame others, and that is the way I have been doing all this time myſelf; but I don't blame my poor brother now

now for living ſo with the great as I uſed to do, for now I have ſeen a little more of the world, I don't wonder any longer at his behaviour: for I know how it is, and I ſee that thoſe who have had good educations, and kept great company, and mixed with the world,—O, it is another thing!—they ſeem quite a different ſpecies!—they are ſo gentle, ſo ſoft-mannered! nothing comes from them but what is meant to oblige! they ſeem as if they only lived to give pleaſure to other people, and as if they never thought at all of themſelves!"

"Ah, Henrietta!" ſaid Cecilia, ſhaking her head, "you have caught the enthuſiaſm of your brother, though you ſo long condemned it! Oh, have a care, leſt, like him alſo, you find it as pernicious as it is alluring!"

"There is no danger for *me*, madam," anſwered ſhe, "for the people I ſo much admire are quite out of my reach. I hardly ever even ſee them; and perhaps it may ſo happen I may ſee them no more!"

"The people?" ſaid Cecilia, ſmiling, "are there, then, many you ſo much diſtinguiſh?"

"Oh, no, indeed!" cried ſhe, eagerly, "there is only one! there *can* be—I mean there are only a few—" ſhe checked herſelf, and ſtopt.

"Whoever you admire," cried Cecilia, "your admiration cannot but honour: yet indulge it not too far, leſt it ſhould wander from your heart to your peace, and make you wretched for life."

"Ah, madam!—I ſee you know who is the particular perſon I was thinking of! but indeed you are quite miſtaken if you ſuppoſe any thing bad of me!"

"Bad of you!" cried Cecilia, embracing her, "I ſcarce think ſo well of any one!"

"But I mean, madam, if you think I forget he is ſo much above me. But indeed I never do; for I only admire him for his goodneſs to my brother, and never think of him at all, but juſt by way of comparing him, ſometimes, to the other people that I ſee, becauſe he makes me hate them ſo, that I wiſh I was never to ſee them again."

"His acquaintance, then," ſaid Cecilia, "has done you but an ill office, and happy it would be for you, could you forget you had ever made it."

"O, I ſhall never do that! for the more I think of him, the more I am out of humour with every body elſe! O, Miſs Beverley! we have a ſad acquaintance indeed! I'm ſure I don't wonder my brother was ſo aſhamed of them. They are all ſo rude, and ſo free, and put one ſo out of countenance.—O, how different is this perſon you are thinking of! he would not diſtreſs any body, or make one

aſhamed

aſhamed for all the world! *You* only are like him! always gentle, always obliging!—— ſometimes I think you muſt be his ſiſter—once, too, I heard—but that was contradicted."

A deep ſigh eſcaped Cecilia at this ſpeech; ſhe gueſſed too well what ſhe might have heard, and ſhe knew too well how it might be contradicted.

"Surely, *you* cannot be unhappy, Miſs Beverley!" ſaid Henrietta, with a look of mingled ſurpriſe and concern.

"I have much, I own," cried Cecilia, aſſuming more chearfulneſs, "to be thankful for, and I endeavour not to forget it."

"O, how often do I think," cried Henrietta, "that you, madam, are the happieſt perſon in the world! with every thing at your own diſpoſal—with every body in love with you, with all the money that you can wiſh for, and ſo much ſweetneſs that nobody can envy you it! with power to keep juſt what company you pleaſe, and every body proud to be one of the number!—O, if I could chooſe who I would be, I ſhould ſooner ſay Miſs Beverley than any princeſs in the world!"

Ah, thought Cecilia, if ſuch is my ſituation—how cruel that by one dreadful blow all its happineſs ſhould be thrown away!

"Were I a rich lady, like you," continued Henrietta, "and quite in my own power, then, indeed, I might ſoon think of nothing but

but thoſe people that I admire! and that makes me often wonder that *you*, madam, who are juſt ſuch another as himſelf——but then, indeed, you may ſee ſo many of the ſame ſort, that juſt this one may not ſo much ſtrike you; and for that reaſon I hope with all my heart that he will never be married as long as he lives, for as he muſt take ſome lady in juſt ſuch high life as his own, I ſhould always be afraid that ſhe would never love him as ſhe ought to do!"

He need not now be ſingle, thought Cecilia, were that all he had cauſe to apprehend!

"I often think," added Henrietta, "that the rich would be as much happier for marrying the poor, as the poor for marrying the rich, for then they would take ſomebody that would try to deſerve their kindneſs, and now they only take thoſe that know they have a right to it. Often and often have I thought ſo about this very gentleman! and ſometimes when I have been in his company, and ſeen his civility and his ſweetneſs, I have fancied I was rich and grand myſelf, and it has quite gone out of my head that I was nothing but poor Henrietta Belfield!"

"Did he, then," cried Cecilia, a little alarmed, "ever ſeek to ingratiate himſelf into your favour?"

"No, never! but when treated with ſo much ſoftneſs, 'tis hard always to remember ones meanneſs! You, madam, have no notion of

of that taſk: no more had I myſelf till lately, for I cared not who was high, nor who was low: but now, indeed, I muſt own I have ſometimes wiſhed myſelf richer! yet he aſſumes ſo little, that at other times I have almoſt forgot all diſtance between us, and even thought——Oh fooliſh thought!——"

"Tell it, ſweet Henrietta, however!"

"I will tell you, madam, every thing! for my heart has been burſting to open itſelf, and nobody have I dared truſt. I have thought, then, I have ſometimes thought, my true affection, my faithful fondneſs, my glad obedience,—might make him, if he did but know them, happier in me than in a greater lady!"

"Indeed," cried Cecilia, extremely affected by this plaintive tenderneſs, "I believe it!—and were I him, I could not, I think, heſitate a moment in my choice!"

Henrietta now, hearing her mother coming in, made a ſign to her to be ſilent; but Mrs. Belfield had not been an inſtant in the paſſage, before a thundering knocking at the ſtreet-door occaſioned it to be inſtantly re-opened. A ſervant then enquired if Mrs. Belfield was at home, and being anſwered by herſelf in the affirmative, a chair was brought into the houſe.

But what was the aſtoniſhment of Cecilia, when, in another moment, ſhe heard from the next parlour the voice of Mr. Delvile ſenior,

ſaying,

ſaying, "Your ſervant, ma'am; Mrs. Belfield, I preſume?"

There was no occaſion, now, to make a ſign to her of ſilence, for her own amazement was ſufficient to deprive her of ſpeech.

"Yes, Sir," anſwered Mrs. Belfield; "but I ſuppoſe, Sir, you are ſome gentleman to my ſon."

"No, ma'am," he returned, "my buſineſs is with yourſelf."

Cecilia now recovering from her ſurpriſe, determined to haſten unnoticed out of the houſe, well knowing that to be ſeen in it would be regarded as a confirmation of all that he had aſſerted. She whiſpered, therefore, to Henrietta, that ſhe muſt inſtantly run away, but upon ſoftly opening the door leading to the paſſage, ſhe found Mr. Delvile's chairmen, and a footman there in waiting.

She cloſed it again, irreſolute what to do: but after a little deliberation, ſhe concluded to out-ſtay him, as ſhe was known to all his ſervants, who would not fail to mention ſeeing her; and a retreat ſo private was worſe than any other riſk. A chair was alſo in waiting for herſelf, but it was a hackney one, and ſhe could not be known by it; and her footman ſhe had fortunately diſmiſſed, as he had buſineſs to tranſact for her journey next day.

Mean while the thinneſs of the partition between the two parlours made her hearing every word that was ſaid unavoidable.

"I am

"I am ſure, Sir, I ſhall be very willing to oblige you," Mrs. Belfield anſwered; "but pray, Sir, what's your name?"

"My name, ma'am," he replied, in a rather elevated voice, "I am ſeldom obliged to announce myſelf; nor is there any preſent neceſſity I ſhould make it known. It is ſufficient, I aſſure you, you are ſpeaking to no very common perſon, and probably to one you will have little chance to meet with again."

"But how can I tell your buſineſs, Sir, if I don't ſo much as know your name?"

"My buſineſs, ma'am, I mean to tell myſelf; your affair is only to hear it. I have ſome queſtions, indeed, to aſk, which I muſt trouble you to anſwer, but they will ſufficiently explain themſelves to prevent any difficulty upon your part. There is no need, therefore, of any introductory ceremonial."

"Well, Sir," ſaid Mrs. Belfield, wholly inſenſible of this ambiguous greatneſs, "if you mean to make your name a ſecret."

"Few names, I believe, ma'am," cried he, haughtily, "have leſs the advantage of ſecrecy than mine! on the contrary, this is but one among a very few houſes in this town to which my perſon would not immediately announce it. That, however, is immaterial; and you will be ſo good as to reſt ſatisfied with my aſſurances, that the perſon with whom you are now converſing, will prove no diſgrace to your character."

Mrs.

Mrs. Belfield, overpowered, though hardly knowing with what, only ſaid *he was very welcome*, and begged him to ſit down.

"Excuſe me, ma'am," he anſwered, "my buſineſs is but of a moment, and my avocations are too many to ſuffer my infringing that time. You ſay you have a ſon; I have heard of him, alſo, ſomewhere before; pray will you give me leave to enquire——I don't mean to go deep into the matter,—but particular family occurrences make it eſſential for me to know,—whether there is not a young perſon of rather a capital fortune, to whom he is ſuppoſed to make propoſals?"

"Lack-a-day, no, Sir!" anſwered Mrs. Belfield, to the infinite relief of Cecilia, who inſtantly concluded this queſtion referred to herſelf.

"I beg your pardon, then; good morning to you, ma'am," ſaid Mr. Delvile, in a tone that ſpoke his diſappointment; but added, "And there is no ſuch young perſon, you ſay, who favours his pretenſions?"

"Dear Sir," cried ſhe, "why there's nobody he'll ſo much as put the queſtion to! there's a young lady at this very time, a great fortune, that has as much a mind to him, I tell him, as any man need deſire to ſee; but there's no making him think it! though he has been brought up at the univerſity, and knows more about all the things, or as much, as any body in the king's dominions."

"O,

"O, then," cried Mr. Delvile, in a voice of far more complacency, "it is not on the ſide of the young woman that the difficulty ſeems to reſt?"

"Lord, no, Sir! he might have had her again and again only for aſking! She came after him ever ſo often; but being brought up, as I ſaid, at the univerſity, he thought he knew better than me, and ſo my preaching was all as good as loſt upon him."

The conſternation of Cecilia at theſe ſpeeches could by nothing be equalled but the ſhame of Henrietta, who, though ſhe knew not to whom her mother made them, felt all the diſgrace and the ſhock of them herſelf.

"I ſuppoſe, Sir," continued Mrs. Belfield, "you know my ſon?"

"No, ma'am; my acquaintance is—— not very univerſal."

"Then, Sir, you are no judge how well he might make his own terms. And as to this young lady, ſhe found him out, Sir, when not one of his own natural friends could tell where in the world he was gone! She was the firſt, Sir, to come and tell me news of him, though I was his own mother! Love, Sir, is prodigious for quickneſs! it can ſee, I ſometimes think, through bricks and mortar. Yet all this would not do, he was ſo obſtinate not to take the hint!"

Cecilia now felt ſo extremely provoked, ſhe was upon the point of burſting in upon them to

to make her own vindication; but as her paſſions, though they tried her reaſon never conquered it, ſhe reſtrained herſelf, by conſidering that to iſſue forth from a room in that houſe, would do more towards ſtrengthening what was thus boldly aſſerted, than all her proteſtations could have chance to deſtroy.

"And as to young ladies themſelves," continued Mrs. Belfield, "they know no more how to make their minds known than a baby does: ſo I ſuppoſe he'll ſhilly ſhally till ſomebody elſe will cry ſnap, and take her. It is but a little while ago that it was all the report ſhe was to have young Mr. Delvile, one of her guardians ſons."

"I am ſorry report was ſo impertinent," cried Mr. Delvile, with much diſpleaſure; "young Mr. Delvile is not to be diſpoſed of with ſo little ceremony; he knows better what is due to his family."

Cecilia here bluſhed from indignation, and Henrietta ſighed from deſpondency.

"Lord, Sir," anſwered Mrs. Belfield, "what ſhould his family do better? I never heard they were any ſo rich, and I dare ſay the old gentleman, being her guardian, took care to put his ſon enough in her way, however it came about that they did not make a match of it: for as to old Mr. Delvile, all the world ſays——"

"All the world takes a very great liberty," angrily interrupted Mr. Delvile, "in ſaying

any

any thing about him: and you will excuſe my informing you that a perſon of his rank and conſideration, is not lightly to be mentioned upon every little occaſion that occurs."

"Lord, Sir," cried Mrs. Belfield, ſomewhat ſurpriſed at this unexpected prohibition, "I don't care for my part if I never mention the old gentleman's name again! I never heard any good of him in my life, for they ſay he's as proud as Lucifer, and nobody knows what it's of, for they ſay—"

"*They* ſay?" cried he, firing with rage, "and who are *they?* be ſo good as inform me that?"

"Lord, every body, Sir! it's his common character."

"Then every body is extremely indecent," ſpeaking very loud, "to pay no more reſpect to one of the firſt families in England. It is a licentiouſneſs that ought by no means to be ſuffered with impunity."

Here, the ſtreet-door being kept open by the ſervants in waiting, a new ſtep was heard in the paſſage, which Henrietta immediately knowing, turned, with uplifted hands to Cecilia, and whiſpered, "How unlucky! it's my brother! I thought he would not have returned till night!"

"Surely he will not come in here?" re-whiſpered Cecilia.

But, at the ſame moment, he opened the door, and entered the room. He was immediately

diately beginning an apology, and ſtarting back, but Henrietta catching him by the arm, told him in a low voice, that ſhe had made uſe of his room becauſe ſhe had thought him engaged for the day, but begged him to keep ſtill and quiet, as the leaſt noiſe would diſcover them.

Belfield then ſtopt; but the embarraſſment of Cecilia was extreme; to find herſelf in his room after the ſpeeches ſhe had heard from his mother, and to continue with him in it by connivance, when ſhe knew ſhe had been repreſented as quite at his ſervice, diſtreſſed and provoked her immeaſurably; and ſhe felt very angry with Henrietta for not ſooner informing her whoſe apartment ſhe had borrowed. Yet now to remove, and to be ſeen, was not to be thought of; ſhe kept, therefore, fixed to her ſeat, though changing colour every moment from the variety of her emotions.

During this painful interruption ſhe loſt Mrs. Belfield's next anſwer, and another ſpeech or two from Mr. Delvile, to whoſe own paſſion and loudneſs was owing Belfield's entering his room unheard: but the next voice that called their attention was that of Mr. Hobſon, who juſt then walked into the parlour.

"Why what's to do here?" cried he, facetiouſly, "nothing but chairs and livery ſervants! Why, ma'am, what is this your rout day? Sir your moſt humble ſervant. I aſk pardon, but I did not know you at firſt. But

come,

come, ſuppoſe we were all to ſit down? Sitting's as cheap as ſtanding, and what I ſay is this; when a man's tired, it's more agreeable."

"Have you any thing farther, ma'am," ſaid Mr. Delvile, with great ſolemnity, "to communicate to me?"

"No, Sir," ſaid Mrs. Belfield, rather angrily, "it's no buſineſs of mine to be communicating myſelf to a gentleman that I don't know the name of. Why, Mr. Hobſon, how come you to know the gentleman?"

"To know *me!*" repeated Mr. Delvile, ſcornfully.

"Why I can't ſay much, ma'am," anſwered Mr. Hobſon, "as to my knowing the gentleman, being I have been in his company but once; and what I ſay is, to know a perſon if one leaves but a quart in a hogſhead, it's two pints too much. That's my notion. But, Sir, that was but an ungain buſineſs at 'Squire Monckton's t'other morning. Every body was no-how, as one may ſay. But, Sir, if I may be ſo free, pray what is your private opinion of that old gentleman that talked ſo much out of the way?"

"My private opinion, Sir?"

"Yes, Sir; I mean if it's no ſecret, for as to a ſecret, I hold it's what no man has a right to enquire into, being of it's own nature it's a thing not to be told. Now as to what I think myſelf, my doctrine is this; I am quite of the old gentleman's mind about ſome things, and

and about others I hold him to be quite wide of the mark. But as to talking in ſuch a whiſky friſky manner that nobody can underſtand him, why it's tantamount to not talking at all, being he might as well hold his tongue. That's what I ſay. And then as to that other article, of abuſing a perſon for not giving away all his lawful gains to every cripple in the ſtreets, juſt becauſe he happens to have but one leg, or one eye, or ſome ſuch matter, why it's knowing nothing of buſineſs! it's what I call talking at random."

"When you have finiſhed, Sir," ſaid Mr. Delvile, "you will be ſo good to let me know."

"I don't mean to intrude, Sir; that's not my way, ſo if you are upon buſineſs—"

"What elſe, Sir, could you ſuppoſe brought me hither? However, I by no means purpoſe any diſcuſſion. I have only a few words more to ſay to this gentlewoman, and as my time is not wholly inconſequential, I ſhould not be ſorry to have an early opportunity of being heard."

"I ſhall leave you with the lady directly, Sir; for I know buſineſs better than to interrupt it: but ſeeing chairs in the entry, my notion was I ſhould ſee ladies in the parlour, not much thinking of gentlemen's going about in that manner, being I never did it myſelf. But I have nothing to offer againſt that; let every man have his own way; that's what *I* ſay.

I ſay. Only juſt let me aſk the lady before I go, what's the meaning of my ſeeing two chairs in the entry, and only a perſon for one in the parlour? The gentleman, I ſuppoſe, did not come in *both*; ha! ha! ha!"

"Why now you put me in mind," ſaid Mrs. Belfield, "I ſaw a chair as ſoon as I come in; and I was juſt going to ſay who's here, when this gentleman's coming put it out of my head."

"Why this is what I call hocus pocus work!" ſaid Mr. Hobſon; "but I ſhall make free to aſk the chairmen who they are waiting for."

Mrs. Belfield, however, anticipated him; for running into the paſſage, ſhe angrily called out, "What do you do here, Miſters? do you only come to be out of the rain? I ſhall have no ſtand made of my entry, I can tell you!"

"Why we are waiting for the lady," cried one of them.

"Waiting for a fiddleſtick!" ſaid Mrs. Belfield; "here's no lady here, nor no company; ſo if you think I'll have my entry filled up by two hulking fellows for nothing, I ſhall ſhew you the difference. One's dirt enough of one's own, without taking people out of the ſtreets to help one. Who do you think's to clean after you?"

"That's no buſineſs of ours; the lady bid us wait," anſwered the man.

Cecilia at this diſpute could with pleaſure have caſt herſelf out of the window to avoid being diſcovered; but all plan of eſcape was too late; Mrs. Belfield called aloud for her daughter, and then, returning to the front parlour, ſaid, "I'll ſoon know if there's company come to my houſe without my knowing it!" and opened a door leading to the next room.

Cecilia, who had hitherto ſat fixed to her chair, now haſtily aroſe, but in a confuſion too cruel for ſpeech: Belfield, wondering even at his own ſituation, and equally concerned and ſurpriſed at her evident diſtreſs, had himſelf the feeling of a culprit, though without the leaſt knowledge of any cauſe: and Henrietta, terrified at the proſpect of her mother's anger, retreated as much as poſſible out of ſight.

Such was the ſituation of the diſcovered, abaſhed, perplexed, and embarraſſed! while that of the diſcoverers, far different, was bold, delighted, and triumphant!

"So!" cried Mrs. Belfield, "why here's Miſs Beverley!—in my ſon's back room!" winking at Mr. Delvile.

"Why here's a lady, ſure enough!" ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "and juſt where ſhe ſhould be, and that is with a gentleman, ha! ha! that's the right way, according to my notion! that's the true maxim for living agreeable."

"I came

"I came to ſee Miſs Belfield," cried Cecilia, endeavouring, but vainly, to ſpeak with compoſure, "and ſhe brought me into this room."

"I am but this moment," cried Belfield, with eagerneſs, "returned home; and unfortunately broke into the room, from total ignorance of the honour which Miſs Beverley did my ſiſter."

Theſe ſpeeches, though both literally true, ſounded, in the circumſtances which brought them out, ſo much as mere excuſes, that while Mr. Delvile haughtily marked his incredulity by a motion of his chin, Mrs. Belfield continued winking at him moſt ſignificantly, and Mr. Hobſon, with ſtill leſs ceremony, laughed aloud.

"I have nothing more, ma'am," ſaid Mr. Delvile to Mrs. Belfield, "to enquire, for the few doubts with which I came to this houſe are now entirely ſatisfied. Good morning to you, ma'am."

"Give me leave, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, advancing with more ſpirit, "to explain, in preſence of thoſe who can beſt teſtify my veracity, the real circumſtances—"

"I would by no means occaſion you ſuch unneceſſary trouble, ma'am," anſwered he, with an air at once exulting and pompous, "the ſituation in which I ſee you abundantly ſatisfies my curioſity, and ſaves me from the apprehenſion I was under of being again convicted of a *miſtake!*"

He then made her a ſtiff bow, and went to his chair.

Cecilia, colouring deeply at this contemptuous treatment, coldly took leave of Henrietta, and courteſying to Mrs. Belfield, haſtened into the paſſage, to get into her own.

Henrietta was too much intimidated to ſpeak, and Belfield was too delicate to follow her; Mr. Hobſon only ſaid, "The young lady ſeems quite daſhed;" but Mrs. Belfield purſued her with entreaties ſhe would ſtay.

She was too angry, however, to make any anſwer but by a diſtant bow of the head, and left the houſe with a reſolution little ſhort of a vow never again to enter it.

Her reflections upon this unfortunate viſit were bitter beyond meaſure; the ſituation in which ſhe had been ſurpriſed,—clandeſtinely concealed with only Belfield and his ſiſter,—joined to the poſitive aſſertions of her partiality for him made by his mother, could not, to Mr. Delvile, but appear marks irrefragable that his charge in his former converſation was rather mild than overſtrained, and that the connection he had mentioned, for whatever motives denied, was inconteſtably formed.

The apparent conviction of this part of the accuſation, might alſo authoriſe, to one but too happy in believing ill of her, an implicit faith in that which regarded her having run out her fortune. His determination not to hear her ſhewed the inflexibility of his character;

racter; and it was evident, notwithſtanding his parading pretenſions of wiſhing her welfare, that his inordinate pride was inflamed, at the very ſuppoſition he could be miſtaken or deceived for a moment.

Even Delvile himſelf, if gone abroad, might now hear this account with exaggerations that would baffle all his confidence: his mother, too, greatly as ſhe eſteemed and loved her, might have the matter ſo repreſented as to ſtagger her good opinion;—theſe were thoughts the moſt afflicting ſhe could harbour, though their probability was ſuch that to baniſh them was impoſſible.

To apply again to Mr. Delvile to hear her vindication, was to ſubject herſelf to inſolence, and almoſt to court indignity. She diſdained even to write to him, ſince his behaviour called for reſentment, not conceſſion; and ſuch an eagerneſs to be heard, in oppoſition to all diſcouragement, would be practiſing a meanneſs that would almoſt merit repulſion.

Her firſt inclination was to write to Mrs. Delvile, but what now, to her, was either her defence or accuſation? She had ſolemnly renounced all farther intercourſe with her, ſhe had declared againſt writing again, and prohibited her letters: and, therefore, after much fluctuation of opinion, her delicacy concurred with her judgment, to conclude it would be moſt proper, in a ſituation ſo intricate, to leave

the matter to chance, and commit her character to time.

In the evening, while ſhe was at tea with Lady Margaret and Miſs Bennet, ſhe was ſuddenly called out to ſpeak to a young woman; and found, to her great ſurpriſe, ſhe was no other than Henrietta.

"Ah, madam!" ſhe cried, "how angrily did you go away this morning! it has made me miſerable ever ſince, and if you go out of town without forgiving me, I ſhall fret myſelf quite ill! my mother is gone out to tea, and I have run here all alone, and in the dark, and in the wet, to beg and pray you will forgive me, for elſe I don't know what I ſhall do!"

"Sweet, gentle girl!" cried Cecilia, affectionately embracing her, "if you had excited all the anger I am capable of feeling, ſuch ſoftneſs as this would baniſh it, and make me love you more than ever!"

Henrietta then ſaid, in her excuſe, that ſhe had thought herſelf quite ſure of her brother's abſence, who almoſt always ſpent the whole day at the bookſeller's, as in writing himſelf he perpetually wanted to conſult other authors, and had very few books at their lodgings: but ſhe would not mention that the room was his, leſt Cecilia ſhould object to making uſe of it, and ſhe knew ſhe had no other chance of having the converſation with her ſhe had ſo very long wiſhed for. She then again begged her

her pardon, and hoped the behaviour of her mother would not induce her to give her up, as ſhe was ſhocked at it beyond meaſure, and as her brother, ſhe aſſured her, was as innocent of it as herſelf.

Cecilia heard her with pleaſure, and felt for her an encreaſing regard. The openneſs of her confidence in the morning had merited all her affection, and ſhe gave her the warmeſt proteſtations of a friendſhip which ſhe was certain would be laſting as her life.

Henrietta then, with a countenance that ſpoke the lightneſs of her heart, haſtily took her leave, ſaying, ſhe did not dare be out longer, leſt her mother ſhould diſcover her excurſion. Cecilia inſiſted, however, upon her going in a chair, which ſhe ordered her ſervant to attend, and take care himſelf to diſcharge.

This viſit, joined to the tender and unreſerved converſation of the morning, gave Cecilia the ſtrongeſt deſire to invite her to her houſe in the country; but the terror of Mrs. Belfield's inſinuations, added to the cruel interpretations ſhe had to expect from Mr. Delvile, forbid her indulging this wiſh, though it was the only one that juſt now ſhe could form.

CHAP. IV.

A CALM.

CECILIA took leave over night of the family, as ſhe would not ſtay their riſing in the morning: Mr. Monckton, though certain not to ſleep when ſhe was going, forbearing to mark his ſolicitude by quitting his apartment at any unuſual hour. Lady Margaret parted from her with her accuſtomed ungraciouſneſs, and Miſs Bennet, becauſe in her preſence, in a manner ſcarce leſs diſpleaſing.

The next morning, with only her ſervants, the moment it was light, ſhe ſet out. Her journey was without incident or interruption, and ſhe went immediately to the houſe of Mrs. Bayley, where ſhe had ſettled to board till her own was finiſhed.

Mrs. Bayley was a mere good ſort of woman, who lived decently well with her ſervants, and tolerably well with her neighbours, upon a ſmall annuity, which made her eaſy and comfortable, though by no means ſuperior to ſuch an addition to her little income as an occaſional boarder might produce.

Here Cecilia continued a full month: which time had no other employment than what ſhe volun-

voluntarily gave to herſelf by active deeds of benevolence.

At Chriſtmas, to the no little joy of the neighbourhood, ſhe took poſſeſſion of her own houſe, which was ſituated about three miles from Bury.

The better ſort of people were happy to ſee her thus ſettled amongſt them, and the poorer, who by what they already had received, knew well what they might ſtill expect, regarded the day in which ſhe fixed herſelf in her manſion, as a day to themſelves of proſperity and triumph.

As ſhe was no longer, as hitherto, repairing to a temporary habitation, which at pleaſure ſhe might quit, and to which, at a certain period, ſhe could have no poſſible claim, but to a houſe which was her own for ever, or, at leaſt, could ſolely from her own choice be transferred, ſhe determined, as much as was in her power, in quitting her deſultory dwellings, to empty her mind of the tranſactions which had paſſed in them, and upon entering a houſe where ſhe was permanently to reſide, to make the expulſion of her paſt ſorrows, the baſis upon which to eſtabliſh her future ſerenity.

And this, though a work of pain and difficulty, was not impracticable; her ſenſibility, indeed, was keen, and ſhe had ſuffered from it the utmoſt torture; but her feelings were not more powerful than her underſtanding

was ſtrong, and her fortitude was equal to her trials. Her calamities had ſaddened, but not weakened her mind, and the words of Delvile in ſpeaking of his mother occurred to her now with all the conviction of experience, that "evils inevitable are always beſt ſupported, becauſe known to be paſt amendment, and felt to give defiance to ſtruggling."*

A plan by which ſo great a revolution was to be wrought in her mind, was not to be effected by any ſudden effort of magnanimity, but by a regular and even tenor of courage mingled with prudence. Nothing, therefore, appeared to her ſo indiſpenſable as conſtant employment, by which a variety of new images might force their way in her mind to ſupplant the old ones, and by which no time might be allowed for brooding over melancholy retroſpections.

Her firſt effort, in this work of mental reformation, was to part with Fidelle, whom hitherto ſhe had almoſt involuntarily guarded, but whom ſhe only could ſee to revive the moſt dangerous recollections. She ſent him, therefore, to the caſtle, but without any meſſage; Mrs. Delvile, ſhe was ſure, would require none to make her rejoice in his reſtoration.

Her

* See Vol. IV. page 24.

Her next ſtep was writing to Albany, who had given her his direction, to acquaint him ſhe was now ready to put in practice their long concerted ſcheme. Albany inſtantly haſtened to her, and joyfully accepted the office of becoming at once her almoner and her monitor. He made it his buſineſs to ſeek objects of diſtreſs, and, always but too certain to find them, of conducting her himſelf to their habitations, and then leaving to her own liberality the aſſiſtance their ſeveral caſes demanded: and, in the overflowing of his zeal upon theſe occaſions, and the rapture of his heart in thus diſpoſing, almoſt at his pleaſure, of her noble fortune, he ſeemed, at times, to feel an ecſtacy that, from its novelty and its exceſs, was almoſt too exquiſite to be borne.

He joined with the beggars in pouring bleſſings upon her head, he prayed for her with the poor, and he thanked her with the ſuccoured.

The pew-opener and her children failed not to keep their appointment, and Cecilia preſently contrived to ſettle them in her neighbourhood; where the poor woman, as ſhe recovered her ſtrength, ſoon got a little work, and all deficiencies in her power of maintaining herſelf were ſupplied by her generous patroneſs. The children, however, ſhe ordered to be coarſely brought up, having no intention to provide for them but by helping them to common employments.

The promiſe, alſo, ſo long made to Mrs. Harrel of an apartment in her houſe, was now performed. That lady accepted it with the utmoſt alacrity, glad to make any change in her ſituation, which conſtant ſolitude had rendered wholly inſupportable. Mr. Arnott accompanied her to the houſe, and ſpent one day there; but receiving from Cecilia, though extremely civil and ſweet to him, no hint of any invitation for repeating his viſit, he left it in ſadneſs, and returned to his own in deep dejection. Cecilia ſaw with concern how he nouriſhed his hopeleſs paſſion, but knew that to ſuffer his viſits would almoſt authoriſe his feeding it; and while ſhe pitied unaffectedly the unhappineſs ſhe occaſioned, ſhe reſolved to double her own efforts towards avoiding ſimilar wretchedneſs.

This action, however, was a point of honour, not of friendſhip, the time being long ſince paſt, that the ſociety of Mrs. Harrel could afford her any pleaſure; but the promiſes ſhe had ſo often made to Mr. Harrel in his diſtreſſes, though extorted from her merely by the terrors of the moment, ſtill were promiſes, and, therefore, ſhe held herſelf bound to fulfil them.

Yet, far from finding comfort in this addition to her family, Mrs. Harrel proved to her nothing more than a trouble and an incumbrance; with no inherent reſources, ſhe was continually in ſearch of occaſional ſupplies;

plies; ſhe fatigued Cecilia with wonder at the privacy of her life, and tormented her with propoſals of parties and entertainments.

She was eternally in amazement that with powers ſo large ſhe had wiſhes ſo confined, and was evidently diſappointed that upon coming to ſo ample an eſtate, ſhe lived, with reſpect to herſelf and her family, with no more magnificence or ſhew than if heireſs to only five hundred pounds a year.

But Cecilia was determined to think and to live for herſelf, without regard to unmeaning wonder or ſelfiſh remonſtrances; ſhe had neither ambition for ſplendour, nor ſpirits for diſſipation; the recent ſorrow of her heart had deadened it for the preſent to all perſonal taſte of happineſs, and her only chance for regaining it, ſeemed through the medium of beſtowing it upon others. She had ſeen, too, by Mr. Harrel, how wretchedly external brilliancy could cover inward woe, and ſhe had learned at Delvile-Caſtle to grow ſick of parade and grandeur. Her equipage, therefore, was without glare, though not without elegance; her table was plain, though hoſpitably plentiful; her ſervants were for uſe, though too numerous to be for labour. The ſyſtem of her œconomy, like that of her liberality, was formed by rules of reaſon, and her own ideas of right, and not by compliance with example, nor by emulation with the gentry in her neighbourhood.

But

But though thus deviating in her actions from the uſual cuſtoms of the young and rich, ſhe was peculiarly careful not to offend them by ſingularity of manners. When ſhe mixed with them, ſhe was eaſy, unaffected, and well bred, and though ſhe ſaw them but ſeldom, her good humour and deſire of obliging kept them always her friends. The plan ſhe had early formed at Mrs. Harrel's ſhe now ſtudied daily to put in practice; but that part by which the uſeleſs or frivolous were to be excluded her houſe, ſhe found could only be ſupported by driving from her half her acquaintance.

Another part, alſo, of that project ſhe found ſtill leſs eaſy of adoption, which was ſolacing herſelf with the ſociety of the wiſe, good, and intelligent. Few anſwered this deſcription, and thoſe few were with difficulty attainable. Many might with joy have ſought out her liberal dwelling, but no one had idly waited till the moment it was at her diſpoſal. All who poſſeſſed at once both talents and wealth, were ſo generally courted they were rarely to be procured; and all who to talents alone owed their conſequence, demanded, if worth acquiring, time and delicacy to be obtained. Fortune ſhe knew, however, was ſo often at war with Nature, that ſhe doubted not ſhortly meeting thoſe who would gladly avail themſelves of her offered protection.

Yet tired of the murmurs of Mrs. Harrel, ſhe longed for ſome relief from her ſociety, and her deſire daily grew ſtronger to owe that relief to Henrietta Belfield. The more ſhe meditated upon this wiſh, the leſs unattainable it appeared to her, till by frequently combating its difficulties, ſhe began to conſider them imaginary: Mrs. Belfield, while her ſon was actually with herſelf, might ſee ſhe took not Henrietta as his appendage; and Mr. Delvile, ſhould he make farther enquiries, might hear that her real connection was with the ſiſter, ſince ſhe received her in the country, where the brother made no pretence to follow her. She conſidered, too, how ill ſhe ſhould be rewarded in giving up Henrietta for Mr. Delvile, who was already determined to think ill of her, and whoſe prejudices no ſacrifice would remove.

Having heſitated, therefore, ſome time between the deſire of preſent alleviation, and the fear of future miſchief, the conſciouſneſs of her own innocence at length vanquiſhed all dread of unjuſt cenſure, and ſhe wrote an invitation to Henrietta encloſed in a letter to her mother.

The anſwer of Henrietta expreſſed her rapture at the propoſal; and that of Mrs. Belfield made no objection but to the expence.

Cecilia, therefore, ſent her own maid to travel with her into Suffolk, with proper directions to pay for the journey.

The

The gratitude of the delighted Henrietta at the meeting was boundleſs; and her joy at ſo unexpected a mark of favour made her half wild. Cecilia ſuffered it not to languiſh for want of kindneſs to ſupport it; ſhe took her to her boſom, became the ſoother of all her cares, and repoſed in her, in return, every thought that led not to Delvile.

There, however, ſhe was uniformly ſilent; ſolemnly and eternally parted from him, far from truſting the ſecret of her former connection to Henrietta, the whole ſtudy of her life was to drive the remembrance of it from herſelf.

Henrietta now taſted a happineſs to which as yet her whole life had been a ſtranger; ſhe was ſuddenly removed from turbulent vulgarity to the enjoyment of calm elegance; and the gentleneſs of her diſpoſition, inſtead of being tyrannically impoſed upon, not only made her loved with affection, but treated with the moſt ſcrupulous delicacy. Cecilia had her ſhare in all the comfort ſhe beſtowed; ſhe had now a friend to oblige, and a companion to converſe with. She communicated to her all her ſchemes, and made her the partner of her benevolent excurſions; ſhe found her diſpoſition as amiable upon trial, as her looks and her manners had been engaging at firſt ſight; and her conſtant preſence and conſtant ſweetneſs, imperceptibly revived her ſpirits, and gave a new intereſt to her exiſtence.

Meantime

Meantime Mr. Monckton, who returned in about a fortnight to the Grove, obſerved the encreaſing influence of Albany with the moſt ſerious concern. The bounties of Cecilia, extenſive, magnificent, unlimited, were the theme of every tongue, and though ſometimes cenſured and ſometimes admired, they were wondered at univerſally. He ſuffered her for a while to go on without remonſtrance, hoping her enthuſiaſm would abate, as its novelty wore out: but finding that week following week was ſtill diſtinguiſhed by ſome freſh act of beneficence, he grew ſo alarmed and uneaſy, he could reſtrain himſelf no longer. He ſpoke to her with warmth, he repreſented her conduct as highly dangerous in its conſequence; he ſaid ſhe would but court impoſtors from every corner of the kingdom, called Albany a lunatic, whom ſhe ſhould rather avoid than obey; and inſinuated that if a report was ſpread of her proceedings, a charity ſo prodigal, would excite ſuch alarm, that no man would think even her large and ſplendid fortune, would enſure him from ruin in ſeeking her alliance.

Cecilia heard this exhortation without either terror or impatience, and anſwered it with the utmoſt ſteadineſs. His influence over her mind was no longer uncontrolled, for though her ſuſpicions were not ſtrengthened, they had never been removed, and friendſhip has no foe ſo dangerous as diſtruſt! She thanked him, however, for his zeal, but aſſured him his apprehenſions were

were groundleſs, ſince though ſhe acted from inclination, ſhe acted not without thought. Her income was very large, and ſhe was wholly without family or connection; to ſpend it merely upon herſelf would be ſomething ſtill worſe than extravagance, it muſt reſult from wilfulneſs the moſt inexcuſable, as her diſpoſition was naturally averſe to luxury and expence. She might ſave, indeed, but for whom? not a creature had ſuch a claim upon her; and with regard to herſelf, ſhe was ſo provided for it would be unneceſſary. She would never, ſhe declared, run in debt even for a week, but while her eſtate was wholly clear, ſhe would ſpend it without reſtriction.

To his hint of any future alliance, ſhe only ſaid that thoſe who diſapproved her conduct, would probably be thoſe ſhe ſhould diſapprove in her turn; ſhould ſuch an event however take place, the retrenching from that time all her preſent peculiar expences, would ſurely, in a clear three thouſand pounds a year, leave her rich enough for any man, without making it incumbent upon her, at preſent, to deny herſelf the only pleaſure ſhe could taſte, in beſtowing that money which to her was ſuperfluous, upon thoſe who received it as the prolongation of their exiſtence.

A firmneſs ſo deliberate in a ſyſtem he ſo much dreaded, greatly ſhocked Mr. Monckton, though it intimidated him from oppoſing it; he ſaw ſhe was too earneſt, and too well ſatisfied

ſatisfied ſhe was right, to venture giving her diſguſt by controverting her arguments: the converſation, therefore, ended with new diſcontent to himſelf, and with an impreſſion npon the mind of Cecilia, that though he was zealous and friendly, he was ſomewhat too worldly and ſuſpicious.

She went on, therefore, as before, diſtributing with a laviſh hand all ſhe could ſpare from her own houſehold; careful of nothing but of guarding againſt impoſition, which tho' ſhe ſometimes unavoidably endured, her diſcernment, and the activity of her inveſtigating diligence, ſaved her from ſuffering frequently. And the ſteadineſs with which ſhe repulſed thoſe whom ſhe detected in deceit, was a check upon tricks and frauds, though it could not wholly put a ſtop to them.

Money, to her, had long appeared worthleſs and valueleſs; it had failed to procure her the eſtabliſhment for which ſhe once flattered herſelf it ſeemed purpoſely deſigned; it had been diſdained by the Delviles, for the ſake of whoſe connection ſhe had alone ever truly rejoiced in poſſeſſing it; and after ſuch a conviction of its inefficacy to ſecure her happineſs, ſhe regarded it as of little importance to herſelf, and therefore thought it almoſt the due of thoſe whoſe diſtreſſes gave it a conſequence to which with her it was a ſtranger.

In this manner with Cecilia paſſed the firſt winter of her majority. She had ſedulouſly filled

filled it with occupations, and her occupations had proved fertile in keeping her mind from idleneſs, and in reſtoring it to chearfulneſs.

Calls upon her attention ſo ſoothing, and avocations ſo various for her time, had anſwered the great purpoſe for which originally ſhe had planned them, in almoſt forcing from her thoughts thoſe ſorrows which, if indulged, would have reſted in them inceſſantly.

CHAP. V.

An Alarm.

THE ſpring was now advancing, and the weather was remarkably fine; when one morning, while Cecilia was walking with Mrs. Harrel and Henrietta on the lawn before her houſe, to which the laſt dinner bell was juſt ſummoning them to return, Mrs. Harrel looked round and ſtopt at ſight of a gentleman galloping towards them, who in leſs than a minute approached, and diſmounting and leaving his horſe to his ſervant, ſtruck them all at the ſame inſtant to be no other than young Delvile!

A ſight ſo unexpected, ſo unaccountable, ſo wonderful, after an abſence ſo long, and

to

to which they were mutually bound, almoſt wholly over-powered Cecilia, from ſurpriſe and a thouſand other feelings, and ſhe caught Mrs. Harrel by the arm, not knowing what ſhe did, as if for ſuccour; while Henrietta with ſcarce leſs, though much more glad emotion, ſuddenly exclaimed, "'tis Mr. Delvile!" and ſprang forward to meet him.

He had reached them, and in a voice that ſpoke hurry and perturbation, reſpectfully made his compliments to them all, before Cecilia recovered even the uſe of her feet: but no ſooner were they reſtored to her, than ſhe employed them with the quickeſt motion in her power, ſtill leaning upon Mrs. Harrel, to haſten into the houſe. Her ſolemn promiſe to Mrs. Delvile became uppermoſt in her thoughts, and her ſurpriſe was ſoon ſucceeded by diſpleaſure, that thus, without any preparation, he forced her to break it by an interview ſhe had no means to prevent.

Juſt as they reached the entrance into the houſe, the butler came to tell Cecilia that dinner was upon the table. Delvile then went up to her, and ſaid, "May I wait upon you for one inſtant before—or after you dine!"

"I am engaged, Sir," anſwered ſhe, though hardly able to ſpeak, "for the whole day."

"You will not, I hope, refuſe to hear me," cried he, eagerly, "I cannot write what I have to ſay,—"

"There

"There is no occaſion that you ſhould, Sir," interrupted ſhe, "ſince I ſhould ſcarcely find time to read it."

She then courteſied, though without looking at him, and went into the houſe; Delvile remaining in utter diſmay, not daring, however wiſhing to follow her. But when Mrs. Harrel, much ſurpriſed at behaviour ſo unuſual from Cecilia, approached him with ſome civil ſpeeches, he ſtarted, and wiſhing her good day, bowed, and remounted his horſe: purſued by the ſoft eyes of Henrietta, till wholly out of ſight.

They then both followed Cecilia to the dining-parlour.

Had not Mrs. Harrel been of this ſmall party, the dinner would have been ſerved in vain; Cecilia, ſtill trembling with emotion, bewildered with conjecture, angry with Delvile for thus ſurpriſing her, angry with herſelf for ſo ſeverely receiving him, amazed what had tempted him to ſuch a violation of their joint agreement, and irreſolute as much what to wiſh as what to think, was little diſpoſed for eating, and with difficulty compelled herſelf to do the honours of her table.

Henrietta, whom the ſight of Delvile had at once delighted and diſturbed, whom the behaviour of Cecilia had filled with wonder and conſternation, and whom the evident inquietude and diſappointment which that behaviour

haviour had given to Delvile, had ſtruck with grief and terror, could not ſwallow even a morſel, but having cut her meat about her plate, gave it, untouched, to a ſervant.

Mrs. Harrel, however, though ſhe had had her ſhare in the ſurpriſe, had wholly eſcaped all other emotion; and only concluded in her own mind, that Cecilia could ſometimes be out of humour and ill-bred as well as the reſt of the world.

While the deſert was ſerving, a note was brought to Henrietta, which a ſervant was waiting in great haſte to have anſwered.

Henrietta, ſtranger to all forms of politeneſs, though by nature ſoft, obliging, and delicate, opened it immediately; ſhe ſtarted as ſhe caſt her eye over it, but bluſhed, ſparkled, and looked enchanted; and haſtily riſing, without even a thought of any apology, ran out of the room to anſwer it.

Cecilia, whoſe quick eye, by a glance unavoidable had ſeen the hand of Delvile, was filled with new amazement at the ſight. As ſoon as the ſervants were gone, ſhe begged Mrs. Harrel to excuſe her, and went to her own apartment.

Here, in a few minutes, ſhe was followed by Henrietta, whoſe countenance beamed with pleaſure, and whoſe voice ſpoke tumultuous delight. "My dear, dear Miſs Beverley!" ſhe cried, "I have ſuch a thing to tell you!—you would never gueſs it,—I don't know how

to

to believe it myſelf,—but Mr. Delvile has written to me!—he has indeed! that note was from him.—I have been locking it up, for fear of accidents, but I'll run and fetch it, that you may ſee it yourſelf."

She then ran away; leaving Cecilia much perplexed, much uneaſy for herſelf, and both grieved and alarmed for the too tender, too ſuſceptible Henrietta, who was thus eaſily the ſport of every airy and credulous hope.

"If I did not ſhew it you," cried Henrietta, running back in a moment, "you would never think it poſſible, for it is to make ſuch a requeſt — that it has frightened me almoſt out of my wits!"

Cecilia then read the note.

To Miſs Belfield.

Mr. Delvile preſents his compliments to Miſs Belfield, and begs to be permitted to wait upon her for a few minutes, at any time in the afternoon ſhe will be ſo good as to appoint.

"Only think," cried the rapturous Henrietta, "it was *me*, poor ſimple *me*, of all people, that he wanted ſo to ſpeak with!—I am ſure I thought a different thought when he went away! but do, deareſt Miſs Beverley, tell me this one thing, what do you think he can have to ſay to me?"

"Indeed,"

"Indeed," replied Cecilia, extremely embarraſſed, "it is impoſſible for me to conjecture."

"If *you* can't, I am ſure, then, it is no wonder *I* can't! and I have been thinking of a million of things in a minute. It can't be about any buſineſs, becauſe I know nothing in the world of any buſineſs; and it can't be about my brother, becauſe he would go to our houſe in town about him, and there he would ſee him himſelf; and it can't be about my dear Miſs Beverley, becauſe then he would have written the note to her: and it can't be about any body elſe, becauſe I know nobody elſe of his acquaintance."

Thus went on the ſanguine Henrietta, ſettling whom and what it could *not* be about, till ſhe left but the one thing to which her wiſhes pointed that it *could* be about. Cecilia heard her with true compaſſion, certain that ſhe was deceiving herſelf with imaginations the moſt pernicious; yet unable to know how to quell them, while in ſuch doubt and darkneſs herſelf.

This converſation was ſoon interrupted, by a meſſage that a gentleman in the parlour begged to ſpeak with Miſs Belfield.

"O deareſt, deareſt Miſs Beverley!" cried Henrietta, with encreaſing agitation, "what in the world ſhall I ſay to him? adviſe me, pray adviſe me, for I can't think of a ſingle word!"

"Impoſſible, my dear Henrietta, unleſs I knew what he would ſay to you!"

"O, but I can gueſs, I can gueſs!"—cried ſhe, her cheeks glowing, while her whole frame ſhook, "and I ſha'n't know what in the whole world to anſwer him! I know I ſhall behave like a fool,—I know I ſhall diſgrace myſelf ſadly!"

Cecilia, truly ſorry Delvile ſhould ſee her in ſuch emotion, endeavoured earneſtly to compoſe her, though never leſs tranquil herſelf. But ſhe could not ſucceed, and ſhe went down ſtairs with expectations of happineſs almoſt too potent for her reaſon.

Not ſuch were thoſe of Cecilia; a dread of ſome new conflict took poſſeſſion of her mind, that mind ſo long tortured with ſtruggles, ſo lately reſtored to ſerenity!

Henrietta ſoon returned, but not the ſame Henrietta ſhe went;—the glow, the hope, the flutter were all over; ſhe looked pale and wan, but attempting, as ſhe entered the room, to call up a ſmile, ſhe failed, and burſt into tears.

Cecilia threw her arms round her neck, and tried to conſole her; but, happy to hide her face in her boſom, ſhe only gave the freer indulgence to her grief, and, rather melted than comforted by her tenderneſs, ſobbed aloud.

Cecilia too eaſily conjectured the diſappointment ſhe had met, to pain her by aſking it; ſhe forbore even to gratify her own curioſity by queſtions that could not but lead to her mortification, and ſuffering her to take her own time for what ſhe had to communicate, ſhe hung over her in ſilence with the moſt patient pity.

Henrietta was very ſenſible of this kindneſs, though ſhe knew not half its merit: but it was a long time before ſhe could articulate, for ſobbing, that *all* Mr. Delvile wanted, at laſt, was only to beg ſhe would acquaint Miſs Beverley, that he had done himſelf the honour of waiting upon her with a meſſage from Mrs. Delvile.

"From Mrs. Delvile?" exclaimed Cecilia, all emotion in her turn, "good heaven! how much, then, have I been to blame? where is he now?—where can I ſend to him?—tell me, my ſweet Henrietta, this inſtant!"

"Oh, madam" cried Henrietta, burſting into a freſh flood of tears, "how fooliſh have I been to open my ſilly heart to you!—he is come to pay his addreſſes to you!—I am ſure he is!—"

"No, no, no!" cried Cecilia, "indeed he is not!—but I muſt, I ought to ſee him,—where, my love, is he?"

"In the parlour,—waiting for an anſwer.—"

Cecilia, who at any other time would have been provoked at ſuch a delay in the delivery of a meſſage ſo important, felt now nothing but concern for Henrietta, whom ſhe haſtily kiſſed, but inſtantly, however, quitted, and hurried to Delvile, with expectations almoſt equally ſanguine as thoſe her poor friend but the moment before had cruſhed.

"Oh now, thought ſhe, if at laſt Mrs. Delvile herſelf has relented, with what joy will I give up all reſerve, all diſguiſe, and frankly avow the faithful affection of my heart!"

Delvile received her, not with the eagerneſs with which he had addreſſed her; he looked extremely diſturbed, and, even after her entrance, undetermined how to begin.

She waited, however, his explanation in ſilence; and, after an irreſolute pauſe, he ſaid, with a gravity not wholly free from reſentment, "I preſumed, madam, to wait upon you from the permiſſion of my mother; but I believe I have obtained it ſo late, that the influence I hoped from it is paſt!"

"I had no means, Sir," anſwered ſhe, chearfully "to know that you came from her: I ſhould elſe have received her commands without any heſitation."

"I would thank you for the honour you do her, were it leſs pointedly excluſive. I have, however, no right of reproach! yet

ſuffer

ſuffer me to aſk, could you, madam, after ſuch a parting, after a renunciation ſo abſolute of all future claim upon you, which though extorted from me by duty, I was bound, having promiſed, to fulfil by principle,—could you imagine me ſo unſteady, ſo diſhonourable, as to obtrude myſelf into your preſence while that promiſe was ſtill in force?"

"I find," cried Cecilia, in whom a ſecret hope every moment grew ſtronger, "I have been too haſty; I did indeed believe Mrs. Delvile would never authoriſe ſuch a viſit; but as you have ſo much ſurpriſed me, I have a right to your pardon for a little doubt."

"There ſpoke Miſs Beverley!" cried Delvile, re-animating at this little apology, "the ſame, the unaltered Miſs Beverley I hoped to find!—yet is ſhe unaltered? am I not too precipitate? and is the tale I have heard about Belfield, a dream? an error? a falſehood?"

"But that ſo quick a ſucceſſion of quarrels," ſaid Cecilia, half ſmiling, "would be endleſs perplexity, I, now, would be affronted that you can aſk me ſuch a queſtion."

"Had I, indeed, *thought* it a queſtion," cried he, "I would not have aſked it: but never for a moment did I credit it, till the rigour of your repulſe alarmed me. You have condeſcended, now, to account for

that, and I am, therefore, encouraged to make known to you the purpoſe of my venturing this viſit. Yet not with confidence ſhall I ſpeak, if ſcarce even with hope!—it is a purpoſe that is the offspring of deſpair.—"

"One thing, Sir," cried Cecilia, who now became frightened again, "let me ſay before you proceed; if your purpoſe has not the ſanction of Mrs. Delvile, as well as your viſit, I would gladly be excuſed hearing it, ſince I ſhall moſt certainly refuſe it."

"I would mention nothing," anſwered he, "without her concurrence; ſhe has given it me: and my father himſelf has permitted my preſent application."

"Good Heaven! cried Cecilia, "is it poſſible!" claſping her hands together in the eagerneſs of her ſurpriſe and delight.

"*Is it poſſible!*" repeated Delvile, with a look of rapture; "ah, Miſs Beverley!—once my own Cecilia!—do you, can you *wiſh* it poſſible?"

"No, no!" cried ſhe, while pleaſure and expectation ſparkled in her eyes, "I wiſh nothing about it.—Yet tell me how it has happened,—I am *curious*," added ſhe, ſmiling, "though not intereſted in it."

"What hope would this ſweetneſs give me," cried he, "were my ſcheme almoſt any other than it is!—but you cannot,—no, it would be unreaſonable,—it would be madneſs

neſs to expect your compliance!—it is next to madneſs even in me to wiſh it,—but how ſhall a man who is deſperate be prudent and circumſpect?"

"Spare, ſpare yourſelf," cried the ingenuous Cecilia, "this unneceſſary pain!—you will find from me no unneceſſary ſcruples."

"You know not what you ſay!—all noble as you are, the ſacrifice I have to propoſe——"

"Speak it," cried ſhe, "with confidence! ſpeak it even with certainty of ſucceſs! I will be wholly undiſguiſed, and openly, honeſtly, own to you, that no propoſal, no ſacrifice can be mentioned, to which I will not inſtantly agree, if firſt it has had the approbation of Mrs. Delvile."

Delvile's gratitude and thanks for a conceſſion never before ſo voluntarily made to him, interrupted, for a while, even his power of explaining himſelf. And now, for the firſt time, Cecilia's ſincerity was chearful, ſince now, for the firſt time, it ſeemed oppoſed by no duty.

When ſtill, therefore, he heſitated, ſhe herſelf held out her hand to him, ſaying, "what muſt I do more? muſt I offer this pledge to you?"

"For my life would I not reſign it!" cried he, delightedly receiving it; "but, oh, how ſoon will you withdraw it, when the

only terms upon which I can hold it, are thoſe of making it ſign from itſelf its natural right and inheritance?"

Cecilia, not comprehending him, only looked amazed, and he proceeded.

"Can you, for my ſake, make ſuch a ſacrifice as this? can you for a man who for yours is not permitted to give up his name, give up yourſelf the fortune of your late uncle? conſent to ſuch ſettlements as I can make upon you from my own? part with ſo ſplendid an income wholly and for ever?—and with only your paternal ten thouſand pounds condeſcend to become mine, as if your uncle had never exiſted, and you had been heireſs to no other wealth?"

This, indeed, was a ſtroke to Cecilia unequalled by any ſhe had met, and more cruel than any ſhe could have in reſerve. At the propoſal of parting with her uncle's fortune, which, deſirable as it was, had as yet been only productive to her of miſery, her heart, diſintereſted, and wholly careleſs of money, was prompt to accede to the condition; but at the mention of her paternal fortune, —that fortune, of which, now, not the ſmalleſt veſtige remained, horror ſeized all her faculties! ſhe turned pale, ſhe trembled, ſhe involuntarily drew back her hand, and betrayed, by ſpeechleſs agitation, the ſudden agonies of her ſoul!

Delvile, ſtruck by this evident diſmay, inſtantly concluded this plan had diſguſted her. He waited ſome minutes in anxious expectation of an anſwer, but finding her ſilence continue while her emotion encreaſed, the deepeſt crimſon dyed his face, and unable to check his chagrin, though not daring to confeſs his diſappointment, he ſuddenly quitted her, and walked, in much diſorder, about the room. But ſoon recovering ſome compoſure, from the aſſiſtance of pride, "Pardon, madam," he ſaid, "a trial ſuch as no man can be vindicated in making. I have indulged a romantic whim, which your better judgment diſapproves, and I receive but the mortification my preſumption deſerved."

"You know not then," ſaid Cecilia, in a faint voice, "my inability to comply?"

"Your ability, or inability, I preſume, are elective?"

"Oh, no!—my power is loſt!—my fortune itſelf is gone!"

"Impoſſible! utterly impoſſible!" cried he, with vehemence.

"Oh that it were!—your father knows it but too well!"

"My father!"

"Did he, then, never hint it to you?"

"Oh, diſtraction!" cried Delvile, "what horrible confirmation is coming!" and again

he walked away, as if wanting courage to hear her.

Cecilia was too much ſhocked to force upon him her explanation; but preſently returning to her, he ſaid, "*You*, only, could have made this credible!"

"Had you, then, actually heard it?"

"Oh, I had heard it as the moſt infamous of falſhoods! my heart ſwelled with indignation at ſo villainous a calumny, and had it not come from my father, my reſentment at it had been inveterate!"

"Alas!" cried Cecilia, "the fact is undeniable! yet the circumſtances you may have heard with it, are, I doubt not, exaggerated."

"Exaggerated, indeed!" he anſwered; "I was told you had been ſurpriſed, concealed with Belfield in a back room; I was told that your parental fortune was totally exhauſted, and that during your minority you had been a dealer with Jews! I was told all this by my father;—you may believe I had elſe not eaſily been made hear it!"

"Yet thus far," ſaid ſhe, "he told you but what is true; though——"

"True!" interrupted Delvile, with a ſtart almoſt frantic. "Oh, never, then, was truth ſo ſcandalouſly wronged! —— I denied the whole charge!—I diſbelieved every ſyllable —I pledged my own honour to prove every aſſertion falſe!"

"Generous

"Generous Delvile!" cried Cecilia, melting into tears, "this is what I expected from you! and, believe me, in *your* integrity my reliance had been similar!"

"Why does Miss Beverley weep?" cried he, softened, and approaching her, "and why has she given me this alarm? these things must at least have been misrepresented; deign, then, to clear up a mystery in which suspense is torture!"

Cecilia then, with what precision and clearness her agitation allowed her, related the whole history of her taking up the money of the Jew for Mr. Harrel, and told, without reserve, the reason of her trying to abscond from his father at Mrs. Belfield's. Delvile listened to her account with almost an agony of attention, now admiring her conduct; now resenting her ill usage; now compassionating her losses; but though variously moved by different parts, receiving from the whole the delight he most coveted in the establishment of her innocence.

Thanks and applause the warmest, both accompanied and followed her narration; and then, at her request, he related in return the several incidents and circumstances to which he had owed the permission of this visit.

He had meant immediately to have gone abroad; but the indisposition of his mother made him unwilling to leave the kingdom till her health seemed in a situation less precarious.

That time, however, came not; the winter advanced, and ſhe grew evidently worſe.—He gave over, therefore, his deſign till the next Spring, when, if ſhe were able, it was her deſire to try the South of France for her recovery, whither he meant to conduct her.

But, during his attendance upon her, the plan he had juſt mentioned occurred to him, and he conſidered how much greater would be his chance of happineſs in marrying Cecilia with ſcarce any fortune at all, than in marrying another with the largeſt. He was convinced ſhe was far other than expenſive, or a lover of ſhew, and ſoon flattered himſelf ſhe might be prevailed upon to concur with him, that in living together, though comparatively upon little, they ſhould mutually be happier than in living aſunder upon much.

When he ſtarted this ſcheme to his mother, ſhe heard it with mingled admiration of his diſintereſtedneſs, and regret at its occaſion; yet the loftineſs of her own mind, her high perſonal value for Cecilia, her anxiety to ſee her ſon finally ſettled while ſhe lived, leſt his diſappointment ſhould keep him ſingle from a laſting diſguſt, joined to a dejection of ſpirits from an apprehenſion that her interference had been cruel, all favoured his ſcheme, and forbid her reſiſtance. She had often proteſted, in their former conflicts, that had Cecilia been portionleſs, her objections had been leſs than to an eſtate ſo conditioned; and that to give

to

to her ſon a woman ſo exalted in herſelf, ſhe would have conquered the mere oppoſition of intereſt, though that of family honour ſhe held invincible. Delvile now called upon her to remember thoſe words, and ever ſtrict in fidelity, ſhe ſtill promiſed to abide by them.

Ah! thought Cecilia, is virtue, then, as inconſiſtent as vice? and can the ſame character be thus high-ſouled, thus nobly diſintereſted with regard to riches, whoſe pride is ſo narrow and ſo inſurmountable, with reſpect to family prejudice!

Yet ſuch a ſacrifice from Cecilia herſelf, whoſe income intitled her to ſettlements the moſt ſplendid, Mrs. Delvile thought ſcarcely to be ſolicited; but as her ſon was conſcious he gave up in expectation no leſs than ſhe would give up in poſſeſſion, he reſolved upon making the experiment, and felt an internal aſſurance of ſucceſs.

This matter being finally ſettled with his mother, the harder taſk remained of vanquiſhing the father, by whom, and before whom the name of Cecilia was never mentioned, not even after his return from town, though loaded with imaginary charges againſt her. Mr. Delvile held it a diminution of his own in the honour of his ſon, to ſuppoſe he wanted ſtill freſh motives for reſigning her. He kept, therefore, to himſelf the ill opinion he brought down, as a reſource in caſe of danger, but a

reſource

reſource he diſdained to make uſe of, unleſs driven to it by abſolute neceſſity.

But, at the new propoſal of his ſon, the accuſation held in reſerve broke out; he called Cecilia a dabler with Jews, and ſaid ſhe had been ſo from the time of her uncle's death; he charged her with the groſſeſt general extravagance, to which he added a moſt inſidious attack upon her character, drawn from her viſits at Belfield's, of long ſtanding, as well as the particular time when he had himſelf ſurpriſed her concealed with a young man in a back parlour: and he aſſerted, that moſt of the large ſums ſhe was continually taking up from her fortune were laviſhed without ſcruple upon this dangerous and improper favourite.

Delvile had heard this accuſation with a rage ſcarce reſtrained from violence; confident in her innocence, he boldly pronounced the whole a forgery, and demanded the author of ſuch cruel defamation. Mr. Delvile, much offended, refuſed to name any authority, but conſented, with an air of triumph, to abide by the effect of his own propoſal, and gave him a ſupercilious promiſe no longer to oppoſe the marriage, if the terms he meant to offer to Miſs Beverley, of renouncing her uncle's eſtate, and producing her father's fortune, were accepted.

"Oh, little did I credit," ſaid Delvile, in concluſion, "that he knew indeed ſo well this laſt

laſt condition was impracticable! his aſſertions were without proof; I thought them prejudiced ſurmiſes; and I came in the full hope I ſhould convict him of his error. My mother too, who warmly and even angrily defended you, was as firmly ſatisfied as myſelf that the whole was a miſtake, and that enquiry would prove your fortune as undiminiſhed as your purity. How will ſhe be ſhocked at the tale I have now to unfold! how irritated at your injuries from Harrel! how grieved that your own too great benevolence ſhould be productive of ſuch black aſperſions upon your character!"

"I have been," cried Cecilia, "too facile and too unguarded; yet always, at the moment, I ſeemed but guided by common humanity. I have ever thought myſelf ſecure of more wealth than I could require, and regarded the want of money as an evil from which I was unavoidably exempted. My own fortune, therefore, appeared to me of ſmall conſequence, while the revenue of my uncle enſured me perpetual proſperity.—Oh, had I foreſeen this moment!—"

"Would you, then, have liſtened to my romantic propoſal?"

"Would I have liſtened?—do you not ſee too plainly I could not have heſitated!"

"Oh, yet, then, moſt generous of human beings, yet then be mine! By our own œconomy we will pay off our mortgages; by living

ing a while abroad, we will clear all our eſtates; I will ſtill keep the name to which my family is bigotted, and my gratitude for your compliance ſhall make you forget what you loſe by it!"

"Speak not to me ſuch words!" cried Cecilia, haſtily riſing: "your friends will not liſten to them, neither, therefore, muſt I."

"My friends," cried he, with energy, "are henceforth out of the queſtion: my father's concurrence with a propoſal he *knew* you had not power to grant, was in fact a mere permiſſion to inſult you; for if, inſtead of dark charges, he had given any authority for your loſſes, I had myſelf ſpared you the ſhock you have ſo undeſervedly received from hearing it.—But to conſent to a plan which *could* not be accepted!—to make *me* a tool to offer indignity to Miſs Beverley!——He has releaſed me from his power by ſo erroneous an exertion of it, and my own honour has a claim to which his commands muſt give place. That honour binds me to Miſs Beverley as forcibly as my admiration, and no voice but her own ſhall determine my future deſtiny."

"That voice, then," ſaid Cecilia, "again refers you to your mother. Mr. Delvile, indeed, has not treated me kindly; and this laſt mock conceſſion was unneceſſary cruelty; but Mrs. Delvile merits my utmoſt reſpect, and I will liſten to nothing which has not her previous ſanction."

"But

"But will her ſanction be ſufficient? and may I hope, in obtaining it, the ſecurity of your's?"

"When I have ſaid I will hear nothing without it, may you not almoſt infer—I will refuſe nothing with it!"

The acknowledgments he would now have poured forth, Cecilia would not hear, telling him, with ſome gaiety, they were yet unauthoriſed by Mrs. Delvile. She inſiſted upon his leaving her immediately, and never again returning, without his mother's expreſs approbation. With regard to his father, ſhe left him totally to his own inclination; ſhe had received from him nothing but pride and incivility, and determined to ſhew publicly her ſuperior reſpect for Mrs. Delvile, by whoſe diſcretion and deciſion ſhe was content to abide.

"Will you not, then, from time to time," cried Delvile, "ſuffer me to conſult with you?"

"No, no," anſwered ſhe, "do not aſk it! I have never been inſincere with you; never, but from motives not to be overcome, reſerved even for a moment; I have told you I will put every thing into the power of Mrs. Delvile, but I will not a ſecond time riſk my peace by any action unknown to her."

Delvile gratefully acknowledged her goodneſs, and promiſed to require nothing more.

He

He then obeyed her by taking leave, eager himſelf to put an end to this new uncertainty, and ſupplicating only that her good wiſhes might follow his enterpriſe.

And thus, again, was wholly broken the tranquillity of Cecilia; new hopes, however faint, awakened all her affections, and ſtrong fears, but too reaſonable, interrupted her repoſe. Her deſtiny, once more, was as undecided as ever, and the expectations ſhe had cruſhed, retook poſſeſſion of her heart.

The ſuſpicions ſhe had conceived of Mr. Monckton again occurred to her; though unable to aſcertain and unwilling to believe them, ſhe tried to drive them from her thoughts. She lamented, however, with bitterneſs, her unfortunate connection with Mr. Harrel, whoſe unworthy impoſitions upon her kindneſs of temper and generoſity, now proved to her an evil far more ſerious and extenſive, than in the midſt of her repugnance to them ſhe had ever apprehended.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

A Suspence.

DELVILE had been gone but a ſhort time, before Henrietta, her eyes ſtill red, though no longer ſtreaming, opened the parlour door, and aſked if ſhe might come in? Cecilia wiſhed to be alone, yet could not refuſe her.

"Well, madam," cried ſhe, with a forced ſmile, and conſtrained air of bravery, "did not I gueſs right?"

"In what?" ſaid Cecilia, unwilling to underſtand her.

"In what I ſaid would happen?—I am ſure you know what I mean."

Cecilia, extremely embarraſſed, made no anſwer; ſhe much regretted the circumſtances which had prevented an earlier communication, and was uncertain whether, now, it would prove moſt kind or moſt cruel to acquaint her with what was in agitation, which, ſhould it terminate in nothing, was unneceſſarily wounding her delicacy for the openneſs of her confidence, and which, however ſerviceable it might prove to her in the end, was in the means ſo rough and piercing ſhe felt the utmoſt repugnance to the experiment.

"You

"You think me, madam, too free," ſaid Henrietta, "in aſking ſuch a queſtion; and indeed your kindneſs has been ſo great, it may well make me forget myſelf: but if it does, I am ſure I deſerve you ſhould ſend me home directly, and then there is not much fear I ſhall ſoon be brought to my ſenſes!"

"No, my dear Henrietta, I can never think you too free; I have told you already every thing I thought you would have pleaſure in hearing; whatever I have concealed, I have been fearful would only pain you."

"I have *deſerved*, madam," ſaid ſhe, with ſpirit, "to be pained, for I have behaved with the folly of a baby. I am very angry with myſelf indeed! I was old enough to have known better,—and I ought to have been wiſe enough."

"You muſt then be angry with yourſelf, next," ſaid Cecilia, anxious to re-encourage her, "for all the love that I bear you; ſince to your openneſs and frankneſs it was entirely owing."

"But there are ſome things that people ſhould *not* be frank in; however, I am only come now to beg you will tell me, madam, when it is to be;—and don't think I aſk out of nothing but curioſity, for I have a very great reaſon for it indeed."

"What be, my dear Henrietta?—you are very rapid in your ideas!"

"I will

"I will tell you, madam, what my reaſon is; I ſhall go away to my own home,—and ſo I would if it were ten times a worſe home than it is!——juſt exactly the day before. Becauſe afterwards, I ſhall never like to look that gentleman in the face,—never, never! —for married ladies I know are not to be truſted!"

"Be not apprehenſive; you have no occaſion. Whatever may be my fate, I will never be ſo treacherous as to betray my beloved Henrietta to *any* body."

"May I aſk you, madam, one queſtion?"

"Certainly."

"Why did all this never happen before?"

"Indeed," cried Cecilia, much diſtreſſed, "I know not that it will happen now."

"Why what, dear madam, can hinder it?"

"A thouſand, thouſand things! nothing can be leſs ſecure."

"And then I am ſtill as much puzzled as ever. I heard, a good while ago, and we all heard that it was to be; and I thought that it was no wonder, I am ſure, for I uſed often to think it was juſt what was moſt likely; but afterwards we heard it was no ſuch thing, and from that moment I always believed there had been nothing at all in it."

"I muſt ſpeak to you, I find, with ſincerity; my affairs have long been in ſtrange perplexity: I have not known myſelf what to expect;

expect; one day has perpetually reverſed the proſpect of another, and my mind has been in a ſtate of uncertainty and diſorder, that has kept it—that ſtill keeps it, from comfort and from reſt!"

"This ſurpriſes me indeed, madam! I thought *you* were all happineſs! but I was ſure you deſerved it, and I thought you had it for that reward. And this has been the thing that has made me behave ſo wrong; for I took it into my head I might tell you every thing, becauſe I concluded it could be nothing to you; for if great people loved one another, I always ſuppoſed they married directly; poor people, indeed, muſt ſtay till they are able to ſettle; but what in the whole world thought I, if they like one another, ſhould hinder ſuch a rich lady as Miſs Beverley from marrying ſuch a rich gentleman at once?"

Cecilia now, finding there was no longer any chance for concealment, thought it better to give the poor Henrietta at leaſt the gratification of unreſerved confidence, which might ſomewhat ſooth her uneaſineſs by proving her reliance in her faith. She frankly, therefore, confeſſed to her the whole of her ſituation. Henrietta wept at the recital with bitterneſs, thought Mr. Delvile a monſter, and Mrs. Delvile herſelf ſcarce human; pitied Cecilia with unaffected tenderneſs, and wondered that the perſon could exiſt who had the heart to give

grief

grief to young Delvile! She thanked her moſt gratefully for repoſing ſuch truſt in her; and Cecilia made uſe of this opportunity, to enforce the neceſſity of her ſtruggling more ſeriouſly to recover her indifferency.

She promiſed ſhe would not fail; and forbore ſteadily from that time to name Delvile any more: but the depreſſion of her ſpirits ſhewed ſhe had ſuffered a diſappointment ſuch as aſtoniſhed even Cecilia. Though modeſt and humble, ſhe had conceived hopes the moſt romantic, and though ſhe denied, even to herſelf, any expectations from Delvile, ſhe involuntarily nouriſhed them with the moſt ſanguine ſimplicity. To compoſe and to ſtrengthen her became the whole buſineſs of Cecilia; who, during her preſent ſuſpenſe, could find no other employment in which ſhe could take any intereſt.

Mr. Monckton, to whom nothing was unknown that related to Cecilia, was ſoon informed of Delvile's viſit, and haſtened in the utmoſt alarm, to learn its event. She had now loſt all the pleaſure ſhe had formerly derived from confiding in him, but though averſe and confuſed, could not withſtand his enquiries.

Unlike the tender Henrietta's was his diſappointment at this relation, and his rage at ſuch repeated trials was almoſt more than he could curb. He ſpared neither the Delviles for their inſolence of mutability in rejecting

or

or ſeeking her at their pleaſure, nor herſelf for her eaſineſs of ſubmiſſion in being thus the dupe of their caprices. The ſubject was difficult for Cecilia to dilate upon; ſhe wiſhed to clear, as he deſerved, Delvile himſelf from any ſhare in the cenſure, and ſhe felt hurt and offended at the charge of her own improper readineſs; yet ſhame and pride united in preventing much vindication of either, and ſhe heard almoſt in ſilence what with pain ſhe bore to hear at all.

He now ſaw, with inexpreſſible diſturbance, that whatever was his power to make her uneaſy, he had none to make her retract, and that the conditional promiſe ſhe had given Delvile to be wholly governed by his mother, ſhe was firm in regarding to be as ſacred as one made at the altar.

Perceiving this, he dared truſt his temper which no farther debate; he aſſumed a momentary calmneſs for the purpoſe of taking leave of her, and with pretended good wiſhes for her happineſs, whatever might be her determination, he ſtifled the reproaches with which his whole heart was ſwelling, and precipitately left her.

Cecilia, affected by his earneſtneſs, yet perplexed in all her opinions, was glad to be relieved from uſeleſs exhortations, and not ſorry, in her preſent uncertainty, that his viſit was not repeated.

She neither ſaw nor heard from Delvile for a week, and augured nothing but evil from ſuch delay. The following letter then came by the poſt.

To Miſs Beverley.

April 2d, 1780.

I must write without comments, for I dare not truſt myſelf with making any; I muſt write without any beginning addreſs, for I know not how you will permit me to addreſs you.

I have lived a life of tumult ſince laſt compelled to leave you, and when it may ſubſide, I am ſtill in utter ignorance.

The affecting account of the loſſes you have ſuffered through your beneficence to the Harrels, and the explanatory one of the calumnies you have ſuſtained from your kindneſs to the Belfields, I related with the plainneſs which alone I thought neceſſary to make them felt. I then told the high honour I had received, in meeting with no other repulſe to my propoſal, than was owing to an inability to accede to it: and informed my mother of the condeſcending powers with which you have inveſted her. In concluſion I mentioned my new ſcheme, and firmly, before I would liſten to any oppoſition, I declared that though wholly to their deciſion I left the relinquiſhing my own name or your fortune, I was not only by your ge-

nerosity more internally yours than ever, but that since again I had ventured, and with permission to apply to you, I should hold myself henceforward unalterably engaged to you.

And so I do, and so I shall! nor, after a renewal so public, will any prohibition but yours have force to keep me from throwing myself at your feet.

My father's answer I will not mention; I would I could forget it! his prejudices are irremediable, his resolutions are inflexible. Who or what has worked him into an animosity so irreclaimable, I cannot conjecture, nor will he tell; but something darkly mysterious has part in his wrath and his injustice.

My mother was much affected by your reference to herself. Words of the sweetest praise broke repeatedly from her; no other such woman, she said, existed; no other such instance could be found of fidelity so exalted! her son must have no heart but for low and mercenary selfishness, if, after a proof of regard so unexampled, he could bear to live without her! O, how did such a sentence from lips so highly reverenced, animate, delight, confirm, and oblige me at once!

The displeasure of my father at this declaration was dreadful; his charges, always as improbable as injurious, now became too horrible for my ears; he disbelieved you had taken up the money for Harrel, he discredited that you visited the Belfields for Henrietta:

passion

paſſion not merely baniſhed his juſtice; but clouded his reaſon, and I ſoon left the room, that at leaſt I might not hear the aſperſions he forbid me to anſwer.

I left not, however, your fame to a weak champion: my mother defended it with all the ſpirit of truth, and all the confidence of ſimilar virtue! yet they parted without conviction, and ſo mutually irritated with each other, that they agreed to meet no more.

This was too terrible! and I inſtantly conſolidated my reſentment to my father, and my gratitude to my mother, into conceſſions and ſupplications to both; I could not, however, ſucceed; my mother was deeply offended, my father was ſternly inexorable: nor here reſts the evil of their diſſention, for the violence of the conflict has occaſioned a return more alarming than ever of the illneſs of my mother.

All her faith in her recovery is now built upon going abroad; ſhe is earneſt to ſet off immediately; but Dr. Lyſter has adviſed her to make London in her way, and have a conſultation of phyſicians before ſhe departs.

To this ſhe his agreed; and we are now upon the road thither.

Such is, at preſent, the melancholy ſtate of my affairs. My mother *adviſed* me to write; forgive me, therefore, that I waited not ſomething more deciſive to ſay. I could prevail upon neither party to meet before the journey;

nor could I draw from my father the baſe fabricator of the calumnies by which he has been thus abuſed.

Unhappily, I have nothing more to add: and whether intelligence, ſuch as this, or total ſuſpenſe, would be leaſt irkſome, I know not. If my mother bears her journey tolerably well, I have yet one more effort to make; and of that the ſucceſs or the failure will be inſtantly communicated to Miſs Beverley, by her eternally devoted, but half diſtracted,

MORTIMER DELVILE.

Scarcely could Cecilia herſelf decide whether this comfortleſs letter or none at all were preferable. The implacability of Mr. Delvile was ſhocking, but his ſlandering her character was ſtill more intolerable; yet the praiſes of the mother, and her generous vindication, joined to the invariable reliance of Delvile upon her innocence, conferred upon her an honour that offered ſome alleviation.

The mention of a fabricator again brought Mr. Monckton to her mind, and not all her unwillingneſs to think him capable of ſuch treachery, could now root out her ſuſpicions. Delvile's temper, however, ſhe knew was too impetuous to be truſted with this conjecture, and her fear of committing injuſtice being thus ſeconded by prudence, ſhe determined to keep to herſelf doubts that could not without danger be divulged.

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She communicated briefly to Henrietta, who looked her earneſt curioſity, the continuance of her ſuſpenſe; and to her own fate Henrietta became ſomewhat more reconciled, when ſhe ſaw that no ſtation in life rendered happineſs certain or permanent.

CHAP. VII.

A RELATION.

ANOTHER week paſt ſtill without any farther intelligence. Cecilia was then ſummoned to the parlour, and to Delvile himſelf.

He looked hurried and anxious; yet the glow of his face, and the animation of his eyes, immediately declared he at leaſt came not to take leave of her.

"Can you forgive," cried he, "the diſmal and unſatisfactory letter I wrote you? I would not diſobey you twice in the ſame manner, and I could not till now have written in any other."

"The conſultation with the phyſicians, then," ſaid Cecilia, "is over?"

"Alas, yes; and the reſult is moſt alarming; they all agree my mother is in a dangerous way, and they rather forbear to oppoſe,

than adviſe her going abroad: but upon that ſhe is earneſtly bent, and intends to ſet out without delay. I ſhall return to her, therefore, with all ſpeed, and mean not to take any reſt till I have ſeen her."

Cecilia expreſſed with tenderneſs her ſorrow for Mrs. Delvile: nor were her looks illiberal in including her ſon in her concern.

"I muſt haſten," he cried, "to the credentials by which I am authoriſed for coming, and I muſt haſten to prove if Miſs Beverley has not flattered my mother in her appeal."

He then informed her that Mrs. Delvile, apprehenſive for herſelf, and ſoftened for him by the confeſſion of her danger, which ſhe had extorted from her phyſicians, had tenderly reſolved upon making one final effort for his happineſs, and ill and impatient as ſhe was, upon deferring her journey to wait its effect.

Generouſly, therefore, giving up her own reſentment, ſhe wrote to Mr. Delvile in terms of peace and kindneſs, lamenting their late diſſention, and ardently expreſſing her deſire to be reconciled to him before ſhe left England. She told him the uncertainty of her recovery, which had been acknowledged by her phyſicians, who had declared a calmer mind was more eſſential to her than a purer air. She then added, that ſuch ſerenity was only to be given her, by the removal of her anxiety at the comfortleſs ſtate of her ſon. She begged him, therefore, to make known the author of Miſs Bever-

Beverley's defamation, aſſuring him, that upon enquiry, he would find her character and her fame as unſullied as his own; and ſtrongly repreſenting, that after the ſacrifice to which ſhe had conſented, their ſon would be utterly diſhonourable in thinking of any other connection. She then to this reaſoning joined the moſt earneſt ſupplication, proteſting, in her preſent diſordered ſtate of health, her life might pay the forfeiture of her continual uneaſineſs.

"I held out," ſhe concluded, "while his perſonal dignity, and the honour of his name and family were endangered; but where intereſt alone is concerned, and that intereſt is combated by the peace of his mind, and the delicacy of his word, my oppoſition is at an end. And though our extenſive and well-founded views for a ſplendid alliance are aboliſhed, you will agree with me hereafter, upon a cloſer inſpection, that the object for whom he relinquiſhes them, offers in herſelf the nobleſt reparation."

Cecilia felt gratified, humbled, animated and depreſſed at once by this letter, of which Delvile brought her a copy. "And what," cried ſhe, "was the anſwer?"

"I cannot in decency," he replied, "ſpeak my opinion of it: read it yourſelf,—and let me hear yours."

To the honourable Mrs. Delvile.

Your extraordinary letter, madam, has extremely ſurpriſed me. I had been willing to hope the affair over from the time my diſapprobation of it was formerly announced. I am ſorry you are ſo much indiſpoſed, but I cannot conclude your health would be reſtored by my acceding to a plan ſo derogatory to my houſe. I diſapprove it upon every account, not only of the name and the fortune, but the lady herſelf. I have reaſons more important than thoſe I aſſign, but they are ſuch as I am bound in honour not to mention. After ſuch a declaration, nobody, I preſume, will affront me by aſking them. Her defence you have only from herſelf, her accuſation I have received from authority leſs partial. I command, therefore, that my ſon, upon pain of my eternal diſpleaſure, may never ſpeak to me on the ſubject again, and I hope, madam, from you the ſame complaiſance to my requeſt. I cannot explain myſelf farther, nor is it neceſſary: it is no news, I flatter myſelf, to Mortimer Delvile or his mother, that I do nothing without reaſon, and I believe nothing upon ſlight grounds.

A few cold compliments concerning her journey, and the re-eſtabliſhment of her health, concluded the letter.

Cecilia

Cecilia, having read, haſtily returned it, and indignantly ſaid, "My opinion, Sir, upon this letter, muſt ſurely be yours; that we had done wiſer, long ſince, to have ſpared your mother and ourſelves, thoſe vain and fruitleſs conflicts, which we ought better to have foreſeen were liable to ſuch a concluſion. Now, at leaſt, let them be ended, and let us not purſue diſgrace wilfully, after ſuffering from it with ſo much rigour involuntarily."

"O, no," cried Delvile, "rather let us now ſpurn it for ever! thoſe conflicts muſt indeed be ended, but not by a ſeparation ſtill more bitter than all of them."

He then told her, that his mother, highly offended to obſerve by the extreme coldneſs of this letter, the rancour he ſtill nouriſhed for the conteſt preceding her leaving him, no longer now refuſed even her ſeparate conſent, for a meaſure which ſhe thought her ſon abſolutely engaged to take.

"Good heaven?" cried Cecilia, much amazed, "this from Mrs. Delvile!—a ſeparate conſent!—"

"She has always maintained," he anſwered, "an independent mind, always judged for herſelf, and refuſed all other arbitration: when ſo impetuouſly ſhe parted us, my father's will happened to be her's, and thence their concurrence: my father, of a temper immoveable and ſtern, retains ſtubbornly the prejudices which once have taken poſſeſſion of him; my mother,

generous as fiery, and noble as proud, is open to conviction, and no ſooner convinced, than ingenuous in acknowledging it: and thence their diſſention. From my father I may hope forgiveneſs, but muſt never expect conceſſion; from my mother I may hope all ſhe ought to grant, for pardon but her vehemence,—and ſhe has every great quality that can dignify human nature!"

Cecilia, whoſe affection and reverence for Mrs. Delvile were unfeigned, and who loved in her ſon this filial enthuſiaſm, readily concurred with him in praiſing her, and ſincerely eſteemed her the firſt among women.

"Now, then," cried he, with earneſtneſs, "now is the time when your generous admiration of her is put to the teſt; ſee what ſhe writes to you;—ſhe has left to me all explanation: but I inſiſted upon ſome credential, leſt you ſhould believe I only owed her concurrence to a happy dream."

Cecilia in much trepidation took the letter, and haſtily run it over.

To Miſs Beverley.

Miſery, my ſweet young friend, has long been buſy with us all; much have we owed to the claſh of different intereſts, much to that rapacity which to enjoy any thing, demands every thing, and much to that general perverſe-

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neſs which labours to place happineſs in what is with-held. Thus do we ſtruggle on till we can ſtruggle no longer; the felicity with which we trifle, at beſt is but temporary; and before reaſon and reflection ſhew its value, ſickneſs and ſorrow are commonly become ſtationary.

Be it yours, my love, and my ſon's, to profit by the experience, while you pity the errors, of the many who illuſtrate this truth. Your mutual partiality has been mutually unfortunate, and muſt always continue ſo for the intereſt of both: but how blind is it to wait, in our own peculiar lots, for that perfection of enjoyment we can all ſee wanting in the lot of others! My expectations for my ſon had "out-ſtepped the modeſty of" probability. I looked for rank and high birth, with the fortune of Cecilia, and Cecilia's rare character. Alas! a new conſtellation in the heavens might as rationally have been looked for!

My extravagance, however, has been all for his felicity, dearer to me than life, — dearer to me than all things but his own honour! Let us but ſave that, and then let wealth, ambition, intereſt, grandeur, and pride, ſince they cannot conſtitute his happineſs, be removed from deſtroying it. I will no longer play the tyrant that, weighing good and evil by my own feelings and opinions, inſiſts upon his acting by the notions I have formed, whatever miſery they may bring him by oppoſing all his own.

I leave the kingdom with little reaſon to expect I ſhall return to it; I leave it—Oh, blindneſs of vanity and paſſion!—from the effect of that violence with which ſo lately I oppoſed what now I am content to advance! But the extraordinary reſignation to which you have agreed, ſhews your heart ſo wholly my ſon's, and ſo even more than worthy the whole poſſeſſion of his, that it reflects upon him an honour more bright and more alluring, than any the moſt illuſtrious other alliance could now confer.

I would fain ſee you ere I go, leſt I ſhould ſee you no more; fain ratify by word of mouth the conſent that by word of mouth I ſo abſolutely refuſed! I know not how to come to Suffolk—is it not poſſible you can come to London? I am told you leave to me the arbitration of your fate,—in giving you to my ſon, I beſt ſhew my ſenſe of ſuch an honour.

Haſten then, my love, to town, that I may ſee you once more! wait no longer a concurrence thus unjuſtly with-held, but haſten, that I may bleſs the daughter I have ſo often wiſhed to own! that I may entreat her forgiveneſs for all the pain I have occaſioned her, and committing to her charge the future happineſs of my ſon, fold to my maternal heart the two objects moſt dear to it!

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

Cecilia wept over this letter with tenderneſs, grief, and alarm; but declared, had it even ſummoned her to follow her abroad, ſhe could not, after reading it, have heſitated in complying.

"O now, then," cried Delvile, "let our long ſuſpences end! hear me with the candour my mother has already liſtened to me — be mine, my Cecilia, at once—and force me not, by eternal ſcruples, to riſk another ſeparation."

"Good heaven, Sir!" cried Cecilia, ſtarting, "in ſuch a ſtate as Mrs. Delvile thinks herſelf, would you have her journey delayed?"

"No, not a moment! I would but enſure you mine, and go with her all over the world!"

"Wild and impoſſible!—and what is to be done with Mr. Delvile?"

"It is on his account wholly I am thus earneſtly precipitate. If I do not by an immediate marriage prevent his farther interference, all I have already ſuffered may again be repeated, and ſome freſh conteſt with my mother may occaſion another relapſe."

Cecilia, who now underſtood him, ardently proteſted ſhe would not liſten for a moment to any clandeſtine expedient.

He beſought her to be patient; and then anxiouſly repreſented to her their peculiar ſituations. All application to his father he was peremptorily forbid making, all efforts

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to remove his prejudices their impenetrable myſtery prevented; a public marriage, therefore, with ſuch obſtacles, would almoſt irritate him to phrenzy, by its daring defiance of his prohibition and authority.

"Alas!" exclaimed Cecilia, "we can never do right but in parting!"

"Say it not," cried he, "I conjure you! we ſhall yet live, I hope, to prove the contrary."

"And can you, then," cried ſhe, reproachfully, "Oh, Mr. Delvile! can you again urge me to enter your family in ſecret?"

"I grieve, indeed," he anſwered, "that your goodneſs ſhould ſo ſeverely be tried: yet did you not condeſcend to commit the arbitration to my mother?"

"True; and I thought her approbation would ſecure my peace of mind; but how could I have expected Mrs. Delvile's conſent to ſuch a ſcheme!"

"She has merely accorded it from a certainty there is no other reſource. Believe me, therefore, my whole hope reſts upon your preſent compliance. My father, I am certain, by his letter, will now hear neither petition nor defence; on the contrary, he will only enrage at the temerity of offering to confute him. But when he knows you are his daughter, *his* honour will then be concerned

cerned in yours, and it will be as much his desire to have it cleared, as it is now to have it censured."

"Wait at least your return, and let us try what can be done with him."

"Oh, why," cried Delvile, with much earnestness, "must I linger out month after month in this wretched uncertainty! If I wait I am undone! my father, by the orders I must unavoidably leave, will discover the preparations making without his consent, and he will work upon you in my absence, and compel you to give me up!"

"Are you sure," said she, half smiling, "he would have so much power?"

"I am but too sure, that the least intimation, in his present irritable state of mind, reaching him of my intentions, would make him not scruple, in his fury, pronouncing some malediction upon my disobedience that *neither* of us, I must own, could tranquilly disregard."

This was an argument that came home to Cecilia, whose deliberation upon it, though silent, was evidently not unfavourable.

He then told her, that with respect to settlements, he would instantly have a bond drawn up, similar to that prepared for their former intended union, which should be properly signed and sealed, and by which he would engage himself to make, upon coming

to

to his eſtate, the ſame ſettlement upon her that was made upon his mother.

"And as, inſtead of keeping up three houſes," he continued, "in the manner my father does at preſent, I mean to put my whole eſtate *out to nurſe*, while we reſide for a while abroad, or in the country, I doubt not but in a very few years we ſhall be as rich and as eaſy as we ſhall deſire."

He told her, alſo, of his well-founded expectations from the relations already mentioned; which the concurrence of his mother with his marriage would thenceforward ſecure to him.

He then, with more coherence, ſtated his plan at large. He purpoſed, without loſing a moment, to return to London; he conjured her, in the name of his mother, to ſet out herſelf early the next day, that the following evening might be dedicated wholly to Mrs. Delvile: through her interceſſion he might then hope Cecilia's compliance, and every thing on the morning after ſhould be prepared for their union. The long-deſired ceremony over, he would inſtantly ride poſt to his father, and pay him, at leaſt, the reſpect of being the firſt to communicate it. He would then attend his mother to the Continent, and leave the arrangement of every thing to his return. "Still, therefore, as a ſingle man," he continued, "I mean to make the journey, and I ſhall take care, by the

the time I return, to have all things in readineſs for claiming my ſweet bride. Tell me, then, now, if you can reaſonably oppoſe this plan?"

"Indeed," ſaid Cecilia, after ſome heſitation, "I cannot ſee the neceſſity of ſuch violent precipitancy."

"Do you not try me too much," cried Delvile, impatiently, "to talk *now* of precipitancy! after ſuch painful waiting, ſuch weariſome expectation! I aſk you not to involve your own affairs in confuſion by accompanying me abroad; ſweet to me as would be ſuch an indulgence, I would not make a run-away of you in the opinion of the world. All I wiſh is the ſecret certainty I cannot be robbed of you, that no cruel machinations may again work our ſeparation, that you are mine, unalterably mine, beyond the power of caprice or ill fortune."

Cecilia made no anſwer; tortured with irreſolution, ſhe knew not upon what to determine.

"We might then, according to the favour or diſpleaſure of my father, ſettle wholly abroad for the preſent, or occaſionally viſit him in England; my mother would be always and openly our friend.—Oh be firm, then, I conjure you, to the promiſe you have given her, and deign to be mine on the conditions ſhe preſcribes. She will be bound to you for ever by ſo generous a conceſſion, and

and even her health may be reſtored by the ceſſation of her anxieties. With ſuch a wife, ſuch a mother, what will be wanting for *me!* Could I lament not being richer, I muſt be rapacious indeed!—Speak, then, my Cecilia! relieve me from the agony of this eternal uncertainty, and tell me your word is invariable as your honour, and tell me my mother gives not her ſanction in vain!"

Cecilia ſighed deeply, but, after ſome heſitation, ſaid, "I little knew what I promiſed, nor know I now what to perform!—there muſt ever, I find, be ſome check to human happineſs! yet, ſince upon theſe terms, Mrs. Delvile herſelf is content to wiſh me of her family—"

She ſtopt; but, urged earneſtly by Delvile, added, "I muſt not, I think, withdraw the powers with which I entruſted her."

Delvile, grateful and enchanted, now forgot his haſte and his buſineſs, and loſt every wiſh but to re-animate her ſpirits: ſhe compelled him, however, to leave her, that his viſit might leſs be wondered at, and ſent by him a meſſage to Mrs. Delvile, that, wholly relying upon her wiſdom, ſhe implicitly ſubmitted to her decree.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

An Enterprise.

CECILIA now had no time for after-thoughts or anxious repentance, ſince, notwithſtanding the hurry of her ſpirits and the confuſion of her mind, ſhe had too much real buſineſs, to yield to penſive indulgence.

Averſe to all falſehood, ſhe invented none upon this occaſion; ſhe merely told her gueſts ſhe was ſummoned to London upon an affair of importance; and though ſhe ſaw their curioſity, not being at liberty to ſatisfy it with the truth, ſhe attempted not to appeaſe it by fiction, but quietly left it to its common fate conjecture. She would gladly have made Henrietta the companion of her journey, but Henrietta was the laſt to whom that journey could give pleaſure. She only, therefore, took her maid in the chaiſe, and, attended by one ſervant on horſeback, at ſix o'clock the next morning, ſhe quitted her manſion, to enter into an engagement by which ſoon ſhe was to reſign it for ever.

Diſintereſted as ſhe was, ſhe conſidered her ſituation as peculiarly perverſe, that from the time of her coming to a fortune which moſt others regarded as enviable, ſhe had been a

ſtranger

ſtranger to peace, a fruitleſs ſeeker of happineſs, a dupe to the fraudulent, and a prey to the needy! the little comfort ſhe had received, had been merely from diſpenſing it, and now only had ſhe any chance of being happy herſelf, when upon the point of relinquiſhing what all others built their happineſs upon obtaining!

Theſe reflections only gave way to others ſtill more diſagreeable; ſhe was now a ſecond time engaged in a tranſaction ſhe could not approve, and ſuffering the whole peace of her future life to hang upon an action dark, private and imprudent: an action by which the liberal kindneſs of her late uncle would be annulled, by which the father of her intended huſband would be diſobeyed, and which already, in a ſimilar inſtance, had brought her to affliction and diſgrace. Theſe melancholy thoughts haunted her during the whole journey, and though the aſſurance of Mrs. Delvile's approbation was ſome relief to her uneaſineſs, ſhe involuntarily prepared herſelf for meeting new mortifications, and was tormented with an apprehenſion that this ſecond attempt made her merit them.

She drove immediately, by the previous direction of Delvile, to a lodging-houſe in Albemarle-Street, which he had taken care to have prepared for her reception. She then ſent for a chair, and went to Mrs. Delvile's. Her being ſeen by the ſervants of that houſe was

not

not very important, as their maſter was ſoon to be acquainted with the real motive of her journey.

She was ſhewn into a parlour, while Mrs. Delvile was informed of her arrival, and there flown to by Delvile with the moſt grateful eagerneſs. Yet ſhe ſaw in his countenance that all was not well, and heard upon enquiry that his mother was conſiderably worſe.

Extremely ſhocked by this intelligence, ſhe already began to lament her unfortunate enterpriſe. Delvile ſtruggled, by exerting his own ſpirits, to reſtore her's, but forced gaiety is never exhilarating; and, full of care and anxiety, he was ill able to appear ſprightly and eaſy.

They were ſoon ſummoned up ſtairs into the apartment of Mrs. Delvile, who was lying upon a couch, pale, weak, and much altered. Delvile led the way, ſaying, "Here, madam, comes one whoſe ſight will bring peace and pleaſure to you!"

"This, indeed," cried Mrs. Delvile, half riſing and embracing her, "is the form in which they are moſt welcome to me! virtuous, noble Cecilia! what honour you do my ſon! with what joy, ſhould I ever recover, ſhall I aſſiſt him in paying the gratitude he owes you!"

Cecilia, grieved at her ſituation, and affected by her kindneſs, could only anſwer with

with her tears; which, however, were not ſhed alone; for Delvile's eyes were full, as he paſſionately exclaimed, "This, this is the ſight my heart has thus long deſired! the wife of my choice taken to the boſom of the parent I revere! be yet but well, my beloved mother, and I will be thankful for every calamity that has led to ſo ſweet a concluſion!"

"Content yourſelf, however, my ſon with one of us," cried Mrs. Delvile, ſmiling; "and content yourſelf, if you can, though your hard lot ſhould make that one this creature of full bloom, health, and youth! Ah, my love," added ſhe, more ſeriouſly, and addreſſing the ſtill weeping Cecilia, "ſhould now Mortimer, in loſing me, loſe thoſe cares by which alone, for ſome months paſt, my life has been rendered tolerable, how peaceably ſhall I reſign him to one ſo able to recompenſe his filial patience and ſervices!"

This was not a ſpeech to ſtop the tears of Cecilia, though ſuch warmth of approbation quieted her conſcientious ſcruples. Delvile now earneſtly interfered; he told her that his mother had been ordered not to talk or exert herſelf, and entreated her to be compoſed, and his mother to be ſilent.

"Be it *your* buſineſs, then," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, more gaily, "to find us entertainment. We

We will promiſe to be very ſtill if you will take that trouble upon yourſelf."

"I will not," anſwered he, "be rallied from my purpoſe; if I cannot entertain, it will be ſomething to weary you, for that may incline you to take reſt, which will be anſwering a better purpoſe."

"Mortimer," returned ſhe, "is this the ingenuity of duty or of love? and which are you juſt now thinking of, my health, or a converſation uninterrupted with Miſs Beverley?"

"Perhaps a little of both!" ſaid he, chearfully, though colouring.

"But you rather meant it ſhould paſs," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "you were thinking only of me? I have always obſerved, that where one ſcheme anſwers two purpoſes, the oſtenſive is never the purpoſe moſt at heart."

"Why it is but common prudence," anſwered Delvile, "to feel our way a little before we mention what we moſt wiſh, and ſo caſt the hazard of the refuſal upon ſomething rather leſs important."

"Admirably ſettled!" cried Mrs. Delvile: "ſo my reſt is but to prove Miſs Beverley's diſturbance!—Well, it is only anticipating our future way of life, when her diſturbance, in taking the management of you to herſelf, will of courſe prove my reſt."

She

She then quietly repoſed herſelf, and Delvile diſcourſed with Cecilia upon their future plans, hopes, and actions.

He meant to ſet off from the church-door to Delvile Caſtle, to acquaint his father with his marriage, and then to return inſtantly to London: there he entreated Cecilia to ſtay with his mother, that, finding them both together, he might not exhauſt her patience, by making his parting viſit occaſion another journey to Suffolk.

But here Cecilia reſolutely oppoſed him; ſaying, her only chance to eſcape diſcovery, was going inſtantly to her own houſe; and repreſenting ſo earneſtly her deſire that their marriage ſhould be unknown till his return to England, upon a thouſand motives of delicacy, propriety, and fearfulneſs, that the obligation he owed already to a compliance which he ſaw grew more and more reluctant, reſtrained him both in gratitude and pity from perſecuting her farther. Neither would ſhe conſent to ſeeing him in Suffolk; which could but delay his mother's journey, and expoſe her to unneceſſary ſuſpicions; ſhe promiſed, however, to write to him often, and as, from his mother's weakneſs, he muſt travel very ſlowly, ſhe took a plan of his route, and engaged that he ſhould find a letter from her at every great town.

The bond which he had already had altered, he inſiſted upon leaving in her own cuſtody,

cuſtody, averſe to applying to Mr. Monckton, whoſe behaviour to him had before given him diſguſt, and in whom Cecilia herſelf no longer wiſhed to confide. He had again applied to the ſame lawyer, Mr. Singleton, to give her away; for though to his ſecrecy he had no tie, he had ſtill leſs to any entire ſtranger. Mrs. Delvile was too ill to attend them to church, nor would Delvile have deſired from her ſuch abſolute defiance of his father.

Cecilia now gave another ſigh to her departed friend Mrs. Charlton, whoſe preſence upon this awful occaſion would elſe again have ſoothed and ſupported her. She had no female friend in whom ſhe could rely; but feeling a repugnance invincible to being accompanied only by men, ſhe accepted the attendance of Mrs. Delvile's own woman, who had lived many years in the family, and was high in the favour and confidence of her lady.

The arrangement of theſe and other articles, with occaſional interruptions from Mrs. Delvile, fully employed the evening. Delvile would not truſt again to meeting her at the church; but begged her to ſend out her ſervants between ſeven and eight o'clock in the morning, at which time he would himſelf call for her with a chair.

She went away early, that Mrs. Delvile

might go to reſt, and it was mutually agreed they ſhould riſk no meeting the next day. Delvile conjured them to part with firmneſs and chearfulneſs, and Cecilia, fearing her own emotion, would have retired without bidding her adieu. But Mrs. Delvile, calling after her, ſaid, "Take with you my bleſſing!" and tenderly embracing her, added, "My ſon, as my chief nurſe, claims a preſcriptive right to govern me; but I will break from his control to tell my ſweet Cecilia what eaſe and what delight ſhe has already given to my mind! my beſt hope of recovery is founded on the pleaſure I anticipate in witneſſing your mutual happineſs: but ſhould my illneſs prove fatal, and that felicity be denied me, my greateſt earthly care is already removed by the ſecurity I feel of Mortimer's future peace. Take with you, then, my bleſſing, for you are become one to me! long daughter of my affection, now wife of my darling ſon! love her, Mortimer, as ſhe merits, and cheriſh her with tendereſt gratitude!—baniſh, ſweeteſt Cecilia, every apprehenſion that oppreſſes you, and receive in Mortimer Delvile a huſband that will revere your virtues, and dignify your choice!"

She then embraced her again, and ſeeing that her heart was too full for ſpeech, ſuffered her to go without making any anſwer. Delvile attended her to her chair, ſcarce leſs moved

moved than herſelf, and found only opportunity to entreat her punctuality the next morning.

She had, indeed, no inclination to fail in her appointment, or riſk the repetition of ſcenes ſo affecting, or ſituations ſo alarming. Mrs. Delvile's full approbation ſomewhat reſtored to her her own, but nothing could remove the fearful anxiety which ſtill privately tormented her with expectations of another diſappointment.

The next morning ſhe aroſe with the light, and calling all her courage to her aid, determined to conſider this day as deciſive of her deſtiny with regard to Delvile, and, rejoicing that at leaſt all ſuſpenſe would be over, to ſupport herſelf with fortitude, be that deſtiny what it might.

At the appointed time ſhe ſent her maid to viſit Mrs. Hill, and gave ſome errands to her man that carried him to a diſtant part of the town: but ſhe charged them both to return to the lodgings by nine o'clock, at which hour ſhe ordered a chaiſe for returning into the country.

Delvile, who was impatiently watching for their quitting the houſe, only waited till they were out of ſight, to preſent herſelf at the door. He was ſhewn into a parlour, where ſhe inſtantly attended him; and being told that the clergyman, Mr. Singleton, and Mrs. Delvile's woman, were already in the church,

ſhe gave him her hand in ſilence, and he led her to the chair.

The calmneſs of ſtifled hope had now taken place in Cecilia of quick ſenſations and alarm. Occupied with a firm belief ſhe ſhould never be the wife of Delvile, ſhe only waited, with a deſperate ſort of patience, to ſee when and by whom ſhe was next to be parted from him.

When they arrived near the church, Delvile ſtopt the chair. He handed Cecilia out of it, and diſcharging the chairmen, conducted her into the church. He was ſurpriſed himſelf at her compoſure, but earneſtly wiſhing it to laſt, took care not to ſay to her a word that ſhould make any anſwer from her neceſſary.

He gave her, as before, to Mr. Singleton, ſecretly praying that not, as before, ſhe might be given him in vain: Mrs. Delvile's woman attended her; the clergyman was ready, and they all proceeded to the altar.

The ceremony was begun; Cecilia, rather mechanically than with conſciouſneſs, appearing to liſten to it: but at the words, *If any man can ſhew any juſt cauſe why they may not lawfully be joined together*, Delvile himſelf ſhook with terror, leſt ſome concealed perſon ſhould again anſwer it; and Cecilia, with a ſort of ſteady diſmay in her countenance, caſt her eyes round the church, with no other view than that of ſeeing from what corner the prohibiter would ſtart.

She

She looked, however, to no purpoſe; no prohibiter appeared, the ceremony was performed without any interruption, and ſhe received the thanks of Delvile, and the congratulations of the little ſet, before the idea, which had ſo ſtrongly pre-occupied her imagination, was ſufficiently removed from it to ſatisfy her ſhe was really married.

They then went to the veſtry, where their buſineſs was not long; and Delvile again put Cecilia into a chair, which again he accompanied on foot.

Her ſenſibility now ſoon returned, though ſtill attended with ſtrangeneſs and a ſenſation of incredulity. But the ſight of Delvile at her lodgings, contrary to their agreement, wholly recovered her ſenſes from the ſtupor which had dulled them. He came, however, but to acknowledge how highly ſhe had obliged him, to ſee her himſelf reſtored to the animation natural to her character, and to give her a million of charges, reſulting from anxiety and tenderneſs. And then, fearing the return of her ſervants, he quitted her, and ſet out for Delvile Caſtle.

The amazement of Cecilia was ſtill unconquerable; to be actually united with Delvile! to be his with the full conſent of his mother, —to have him her's, beyond the power of his father,—ſhe could not reconcile it with poſſibility; ſhe fancied it a dream,—but a dream from which ſhe wiſhed not to awake.

BOOK X.

CHAPTER I.

A Discovery

CECILIA's journey back to the country was as ſafe and free from interruption as her journey had been to town, and all that diſtinguiſhed them was what paſſed in her own mind: the doubts, apprehenſions, and deſponding ſuſpenſe which had accompanied her ſetting out, were now all removed, and certainty, eaſe, the expectation of happineſs, and the ceſſation of all perplexity, had taken their place. She had nothing left to dread but the inflexibility of Mr. Delvile, and hardly any thing even to hope but the recovery of his lady.

Her friends at her return expreſſed their wonder at her expedition, but their wonder at what occaſioned it, though ſtill greater, met no ſatisfaction. Henrietta rejoiced in her ſight, though her abſence had been ſo ſhort; and Cecilia, whoſe affection with her pity increaſed, intimated to her the event for which

ſhe

ſhe wiſhed her to prepare herſelf, and frankly acknowledged ſhe had reaſon to expect it would ſoon take place.

Henrietta endeavoured with compoſure to receive this intelligence, and to return ſuch a mark of confidence, with chearful congratulations: but her fortitude was unequal to an effort ſo heroic, and her character was too ſimple to aſſume a greatneſs ſhe felt not: ſhe ſighed and changed colour; and haſtily quitted the room that ſhe might ſob aloud in another.

Warm-hearted, tender, and ſuſceptible, her affections were all undiſguiſed: ſtruck with the elegance of Delvile, and enchanted by his ſervices to her brother, ſhe had loſt to him her heart at firſt without miſſing it, and, when miſſed, without ſeeking to reclaim it. The hopeleſſneſs of ſuch a paſſion ſhe never conſidered, nor aſked herſelf its end, or ſcarce ſuſpected its aim; it was pleaſant to her at the time, and ſhe looked not to the future, but fed it with viſionary ſchemes, and ſoothed it with voluntary fancies. Now ſhe knew all was over, ſhe felt the folly ſhe had committed; but though ſenſibly and candidly angry at her own error, its conviction offered nothing but ſorrow to ſucceed it.

The felicity of Cecilia, whom ſhe loved, admired, and revered, ſhe wiſhed with the genuine ardour of zealous ſincerity; but that

Delvile, the very cauſe and ſole object of her own perſonal unhappineſs, ſhould himſelf conſtitute that felicity, was too much for her ſpirits, and ſeemed to her mortified mind too cruel in her deſtiny.

Cecilia, who in the very vehemence of her ſorrow ſaw its innocence, was too juſt and too noble to be offended by it, or impute to the bad paſſions of envy or jealouſy, the artleſs regret of an untutor'd mind. To be penetrated too deeply with the merit of Delvile, with her wanted no excuſe, and ſhe grieved for her ſituation with but little mixture of blame, and none of ſurpriſe. She redoubled her kindneſs and careſſes with the hope of conſoling her, but ventured to truſt her no farther, till reflection, and her natural good ſenſe, ſhould better enable her to bear an explanation.

Nor was this friendly exertion any longer a hardſhip to her; the ſudden removal, in her own feelings and affairs, of diſtreſs and expectation, had now ſo much lightened her heart, that ſhe could ſpare without repining, ſome portion of its ſpirit to her dejected young friend.

But an incident happened two mornings after which called back, and moſt unpleaſantly, her attention to herſelf. She was told that Mrs. Matt, the poor woman ſhe had ſettled in Bury, begged an audience, and upon ſending for her up ſtairs, and deſiring

deſiring to know what ſhe could do for her, "Nothing, madam, juſt now," ſhe anſwered, "for I don't come upon my own buſineſs, but to tell ſome news to you, madam. You bid me never take notice of the wedding, that was to be, and I'm ſure I never opened my mouth about it from that time to this; but I have found out who it was put a ſtop to it, and ſo I come to tell you."

Cecilia, extremely amazed, eagerly deſired her to go on.

"Why, madam, I don't know the gentlewoman's name quite right yet, but I can tell you where ſhe lives, for I knew her as ſoon as I ſet eyes on her, when I ſee her at church laſt Sunday, and I would have followed her home, but ſhe went into a coach, and I could not walk faſt enough; but I aſked one of the footmen where ſhe lived, and he ſaid at the great houſe at the Grove: and perhaps, madam, you may know where that is: and then he told me her name, but that I can't juſt now think of."

"Good heaven!" cried Cecilia, — "it could not be Bennet?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's the very name; I know it again now I hear it."

Cecilia then haſtily diſmiſſed her, firſt deſiring her not to mention the circumſtance to any body.

Shocked and diſmayed, ſhe now ſaw, but ſaw with horror, the removal of all her doubts,

and the explanation of all her difficulties, in the full and irrefragable diſcovery of the perfidy of her oldeſt friend and confidant.

Miſs Bennet herſelf ſhe regarded in the affair as a mere tool, which, though in effect it did the work, was innocent of its miſchief, becauſe powerleſs but in the hand of its employer.

"That employer," cried ſhe, "muſt be Mr. Monckton! Mr. Monckton, whom ſo long I have known, who ſo willingly has been my counſellor, ſo ably my inſtructor! in whoſe integrity I have confided, upon whoſe friendſhip I have relied! my ſuccour in all emergencies, my guide in all perplexities!—Mr. Monckton thus diſhonourably, thus barbarouſly to betray me! to turn againſt me the very confidence I had repoſed in his regard for me! and make uſe of my own truſt to furniſh the means to injure me!"—

She was now wholly confirmed that he had wronged her with Mr. Delvile; ſhe could not have two enemies ſo malignant without provocations, and he who ſo unfeelingly could diſſolve a union at the very altar, could alone have the baſeneſs to calumniate her ſo cruelly.

Evil thoughts thus awakened, ſtopt not merely upon facts; conjecture carried her farther, and conjecture built upon probability. The officiouſneſs of Morrice in purſuing her to London, his viſiting her when there,

there, and his following and watching Delvile, ſhe now reaſonably concluded were actions directed by Mr. Monckton, whoſe houſe he had but juſt left, and whoſe orders, whatever they might be, ſhe was almoſt certain he would obey. Availing himſelf, therefore, of the forwardneſs and ſuppleneſs which met in this young man, ſhe doubted not but his intelligence had contributed to acquaint him with her proceedings.

The motive of ſuch deep concerted and accumulated treachery was next to be ſought: nor was the ſearch long; one only could have tempted him to ſchemes ſo hazardous and coſtly; and, unſuſpicious as ſhe was, ſhe now ſaw into his whole deſign.

Long accuſtomed to regard him as a ſafe and diſintereſted old friend, the reſpect with which, as a child, ſhe had looked up to him, ſhe had inſenſibly preſerved when a woman. That reſpect had taught her to conſider his notice as a favour, and far from ſuſpiciouſly ſhunning, ſhe had innocently courted it: and his readineſs in adviſing and tutoring her, his frank and eaſy friendlineſs of behaviour, had kept his influence unimpaired, by preventing its ſecret purpoſe from being detected.

But now the whole myſtery was revealed; his averſion to the Delviles, to which hitherto ſhe had attributed all ſhe diſapproved in his behaviour, ſhe was convinced muſt be inade-

quate to ſtimulate him to ſuch lengths. That averſion itſelf was by this late ſurmiſe accounted for, and no ſooner did it occur to her, than a thouſand circumſtances confirmed it.

The firſt among theſe was the evident ill-will of Lady Margaret, which, though ſhe had conſtantly imputed to the general iraſcibility for which her character was notorious, ſhe had often wondered to find impenetrable to all endeavours to pleaſe or ſoften her. His care of her fortune, his exhortations againſt her expences, his wiſh to make her live with Mr. Briggs, all contributed to point out the ſelfiſhneſs of his attentions, which in one inſtance rendered viſible, became obvious in every other.

Yet various as were the incidents that now poured upon her memory to his diſgrace, not one among them took its riſe from his behaviour to herſelf, which always had been ſcrupulouſly circumſpect, or if for a moment unguarded, only at a ſeaſon when her own diſtreſs or confuſion had prevented her from perceiving it. This recollection almoſt ſtaggered her ſuſpicions; yet ſo abſolute ſeemed the confirmation they received from every other, that her doubt was overpowered, and ſoon wholly extinguiſhed.

She was yet ruminating upon this ſubject, when word was brought her that Mr. Monckton was in the parlour.

Mingled

Mingled diſguſt and indignation made her ſhudder at his name, and without pauſing a moment, ſhe ſent him word ſhe was engaged, and could not poſſibly leave her room.

Aſtoniſhed by ſuch a diſmiſſion, he left the houſe in the utmoſt confuſion. But Cecilia could not endure to ſee him, after a diſcovery of ſuch hypocriſy and villainy.

She conſidered, however, that the matter could not reſt here: he would demand an explanation, and perhaps, by his unparalleled addreſs, again contrive to ſeem innocent, notwithſtanding appearances were at preſent ſo much againſt him. Expecting, therefore, ſome artifice, and determined not to be duped by it, ſhe ſent again for the pew-opener, to examine her more ſtrictly.

The woman was out at work in a private family, and could not come till the evening: but, when farther queſtioned, the deſcription ſhe gave of Miſs Bennet was too exact to be diſputed.

She then deſired her to call again the next morning; and ſent a ſervant to the Grove, with her compliments to Miſs Bennet, and a requeſt that ſhe might ſend her carriage for her the next day, at any time ſhe pleaſed, as ſhe wiſhed much to ſpeak with her.

This meſſage, ſhe was aware, might create ſome ſuſpicion, and put her upon her guard; but ſhe thought, nevertheleſs, a ſudden meeting with the pew-opener, whom ſhe meant abruptly

abruptly to confront with her, would baffle the ſecurity of any previouſly ſettled ſcheme.

To a conviction ſuch as this even Mr. Monckton muſt ſubmit, and ſince he was loſt to her as a friend, ſhe might at leaſt ſave herſelf the pain of keeping up his acquaintance.

CHAP. II.

An Interview.

THE ſervant did not return till it was dark; and then, with a look of much diſmay, ſaid he had been able to meet with nobody who could either give or take a meſſage; that the Grove was all in confuſion, and the whole country in an uproar, for Mr. Monckton, juſt as he arrived, had been brought home dead!

Cecilia ſcreamed with involuntary horror; a pang like remorſe ſeized her mind, with the apprehenſion ſhe had ſome ſhare in this cataſtrophe, and innocent as ſhe was either of his fall or his crimes, ſhe no ſooner heard he was no more, than ſhe forgot he had offended her, and reproached herſelf with ſeverity for the ſhame to which ſhe meant to expoſe him the next morning.

Dreadfully

Dreadfully disturbed by this horrible incident, she entreated Mrs. Harrel and Henrietta to sup by themselves, and going into her own room, determined to write the whole affair to Delvile, in a letter she should direct to be left at the post-office for him at Margate.

And here strongly she felt the happiness of being actually his wife; she could now without reserve make him acquainted with all her affairs, and tell to the master of her heart every emotion that entered it.

While engaged in this office, the very action of which quieted her, a letter was brought her from Delvile himself. She received it with gratitude, and opened it with joy; he had promised to write soon, but *so* soon she had thought impossible.

The reading took not much time; the letter contained but the following words:

To Miss Beverley.

My Cecilia!

Be alone, I conjure you, dismiss every body, and admit me this moment!

Great was her astonishment at this note! no name to it, no conclusion, the characters indistinct, the writing crooked, the words so few, and those few scarce legible!

He

He desired to see her, and to see her alone; she could not hesitate in her compliance,—but whom could she dismiss?—her servants, if ordered away, would but be curiously upon the watch,—she could think of no expedient, she was all hurry and amazement.

She asked if any one waited for an answer; the footman said no; that the note was given in by somebody who did not speak, and who ran out of sight the moment he had delivered it.

She could not doubt this was Delvile himself,—Delvile who should now be just returned from the castle to his mother, and whom she had thought not even a letter would reach if directed any where nearer than Margate!

All she could devise in obedience to him, was to go and wait for him alone in her dressing room, giving orders that if any one called they might be immediately brought up to her, as she expected somebody upon business, with whom she must not be interrupted.

This was extremely disagreeable to her; yet, contrary as it was to their agreement, she felt no inclination to reproach Delvile; the abruptness of his note, the evident hand-shaking with which it had been written, the strangeness of the request in a situation such as theirs, all concurred to assure her he came not to her idly, and all led her to apprehend he came to her with evil tidings.

What

What they might be, ſhe had no time to conjecture; a ſervant, in a few minutes, opened the dreſſing-room door, and ſaid, "Ma'am, a gentleman;" and Delvile, abruptly entering, ſhut it himſelf, in his eagerneſs to get rid of him.

At his ſight, her prognoſtication of ill became ſtronger! ſhe went forward to meet him, and he advanced to her ſmiling and in haſte; but that ſmile did not well do its office; it concealed not a pallid countenance, in which every feature ſpoke horror; it diſguiſed not an aching heart, which almoſt viſibly throbbed with intolerable emotion! Yet he addreſſed her in terms of tenderneſs and peace; but his tremulous voice counteracted his words, and ſpoke that all within was tumult and war!

Cecilia, amazed, affrighted, had no power to haſten an explanation, which, on his own part, he ſeemed unable, or fearful to begin. He talked to her of his happineſs in again ſeeing her before he left the kingdom, entreated her to write to him continually, ſaid the ſame thing two and three times in a breath, began with one ſubject, and ſeemed unconſcious he wandered preſently into another, and aſked her queſtions innumerable about her health, journey, affairs, and eaſe of mind, without hearing from her any anſwer, or ſeeming to miſs that ſhe made none.

Cecilia grew dreadfully terrified; ſomething ſtrange and moſt alarming ſhe was ſure muſt have

have happened, but what, ſhe had no means to know, nor courage, nor even words to enquire.

Delvile, at length, the firſt hurry of his ſpirits, abating, became more coherent and conſiderate: and looking anxiouſly at her, ſaid, "Why this ſilence, my Cecilia?"

"I know not!" ſaid ſhe, endeavouring to recover herſelf, "but your coming was unexpected: I was juſt writing to you at Margate."

"Write ſtill, then; but direct to Oſtend; I ſhall be quicker than the poſt; and I would not loſe a letter—a line—a word from you, for all the world can offer me!"

"Quicker than the poſt?" cried Cecilia; "but how can Mrs. Delvile—" ſhe ſtopt, not knowing what ſhe might venture to aſk.

"She is now on the road to Margate; I hope to be there to receive her. I mean but to bid you adieu, and be gone."

Cecilia made no anſwer; ſhe was more and more aſtoniſhed, more and more confounded.

"You are thoughtful!" ſaid he, with tenderneſs; "are you unhappy?—ſweeteſt Cecilia! moſt excellent of human creatures! if I have made you unhappy—and I muſt!—it is inevitable!—"

"Oh, Delvile!" cried ſhe, now aſſuming more courage, "why will you not ſpeak to me openly?—ſomething, I ſee, is wrong; may I not hear it? may I not tell you, at leaſt,

leaſt, my concern that any thing has diſtreſſed you?"

"You are too good!" cried he; "to deſerve you is not poſſible,—but to afflict you is inhuman!"

"Why ſo?" cried ſhe, more chearfully; "muſt I not ſhare the common lot? or expect the whole world to be new modelled, leſt I ſhould meet in it any thing but happineſs!"

"There is not, indeed, much danger! Have you pen and ink here?"

She brought them to him immediately, with paper.

"You have been writing to me, you ſay?—I will begin a letter myſelf."

"To me?" cried ſhe.

He made no anſwer, but took up the pen, and wrote a few words, and then, flinging it down, ſaid, "Fool!—I could have done this without coming!"

"May I look at it?" ſaid ſhe; and, finding he made no oppoſition, advanced and read,

I fear to alarm you by raſh precipitation—I fear to alarm you by lingering ſuſpenſe,—but all is not well—

"Fear nothing!" cried ſhe, turning to him with the kindeſt earneſtneſs; "tell me, whatever it may be!—Am I not your wife! bound by every tie divine and human to ſhare in all your ſorrows, if, unhappily, I cannot mitigate them!"

"Since

Since you allow me," cried he, gratefully, "ſo ſweet a claim, a claim to which all others yield, and which if you repent not giving me, will make all others nearly immaterial to me, —I will own to you that all, indeed, is not well! I have been haſty,—you will blame me; I deſerve, indeed, to be blamed!—entruſted with your peace and happineſs, to ſuffer rage, reſentment, violence, to make me forego what I owed to ſuch a depoſite!—If your blame, however, ſtops ſhort of repentance—but it cannot!"

"What, then," cried ſhe, with warmth, "muſt you have done? for there is not an action of which I believe you capable, there is not an event which I believe to be poſſible, that can ever make me repent belonging to you wholly!"

"Generous, condeſcending Cecilia!" cried he; "words ſuch as theſe, hung there not upon me an evil the moſt depreſſing, would be almoſt more than I could bear—would make me too bleſt for mortality!"

"But words ſuch as theſe," ſaid ſhe, more gaily, "I might long have coquetted ere I had ſpoken, had you not drawn them from me by this alarm. Take, therefore, the good with the ill, and remember, if all does not go right, you have now a truſty friend, as willing to be the partner of your ſerious as your happieſt hours."

"Shew

"Shew but as much firmneſs as you have ſhewn ſweetneſs," cried he, "and I will fear to tell you nothing."

She reiterated her aſſurances; they then both ſat down, and he began his account.

"Immediately from your lodgings I went where I had ordered a chaiſe, and ſtopt only to change horſes till I reached Delvile caſtle. My father ſaw me with ſurpriſe, and received me with coldneſs. I was compelled by my ſituation to be abrupt, and told him I came, before I accompanied my mother abroad, to make him acquainted with an affair which I thought myſelf bound in duty and reſpect to ſuffer no one to communicate to him but myſelf. He then ſternly interrupted me, and declared in high terms, that if this affair concerned *you*, he would not liſten to it. I attempted to remonſtrate upon this injuſtice, when he paſſionately broke forth into new and horrible charges againſt you, affirming that he had them from authority as indiſputable as ocular demonſtration. I was then certain of ſome foul play."—

"Foul play indeed!" cried Cecilia, who now knew but too well by whom ſhe had been injured. "Good heaven, how have I been deceived, where moſt I have truſted!"

"I told him," continued Delvile, "ſome groſs impoſition had been practiſed upon him, and earneſtly conjured him no longer to conceal

ceal from me by whom. This, unfortunately, encreaſed his rage; impoſition, he ſaid, was not ſo eaſily played upon him, he left that for *me* who ſo readily was duped; while for himſelf, he had only given credit to a man of much conſideration in Suffolk, who had known you from a child, who had ſolemnly aſſured him he had repeatedly endeavoured to reclaim you, who had reſcued you from the hands of Jews at his own hazard and loſs, and who actually ſhewed him bonds acknowledging immenſe debts, which were ſigned with your own hand."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Cecilia. "I believed not ſuch guilt and perfidy poſſible!"

"I was ſcarce myſelf," reſumed Delvile, "while I heard him: I demanded even with fierceneſs his author, whom I ſcrupled not to execrate as he deſerved; he coldly anſwered he was bound by an oath never to reveal him, nor ſhould he repay his honourable attention to his family by a breach of his own word, were it even leſs formally engaged. I then loſt all patience; to mention honour, I cried, was a farce, where ſuch infamous calumnies were liſtened to;—but let me not ſhock you unneceſſarily, you may readily conjecture what paſſed."

"Ah me!" cried Cecilia, "you have then quarrelled with your father!"

"I have!" ſaid he; "nor does he yet know I am married: in ſo much wrath there was no room for narration; I only pledged myſelf by all I held ſacred, never to reſt till I had cleared your

your ſame, by the detection of this villainy, and then left him without farther explanation."

"Oh, return, then, to him directly!" cried Cecilia; "he is your father, you are bound to bear with his diſpleaſure;—alas! had you never known me, you had never incurred it!"

"Believe me," he anſwered, "I am ill at eaſe under it: if you wiſh it, when you have heard me, I will go to him immediately; if not, I will write, and you ſhall yourſelf dictate what."

Cecilia thanked him, and begged he would continue his account.

"My firſt ſtep, when I left the caſtle, was to ſend a letter to my mother, in which I entreated her to ſet out as ſoon as poſſible for Margate, as I was detained from her unavoidably, and was unwilling my delay ſhould either retard our journey, or oblige her to travel faſter. At Margate I hoped to be as ſoon as herſelf, if not before her.

"And why," cried Cecilia, "did you not go to town as you had promiſed, and accompany her?"

"I had buſineſs another way. I came hither."

"Directly?"

"No;—but ſoon."

"Where did you go firſt?"

"My Cecilia, it is now you muſt ſummon your fortitude: I left my father without an explanation on *my* part;—but not till, in his rage

rage of asserting his authority, he had unwarily named his informant."

"Well!"

"That informant—the most deceitful of men!—was your long pretended friend, Mr. Monckton!

"So I feared!" said Cecilia, whose blood now ran cold through her veins with sudden and new apprehensions.

"I rode to the Grove on hack-horses, and on a full gallop the whole way. I got to him early in the evening. I was shewn into his library. I told him my errand.—You look pale, my love? You are not well?—"

Cecilia, too sick for speech, leant her head upon a table. Delvile was going to call for help; but she put her hand upon his arm to stop him, and perceiving she was only mentally affected, he rested, and endeavoured by every possible means to revive her.

After a while, she again raised her head, faintly saying, "I am sorry I interrupted you; but the conclusion I already know,—Mr. Monckton is dead!"

"Not dead," cried he; "dangerously, indeed, wounded, but thank heaven, not actually dead!"

"Not dead? cried Cecilia, with recruited strength and spirits, "O, then, all yet may be well—if he is not dead, he may recover!"

"He may; I hope he will!"

"Now,

"Now, then," ſhe cried, "tell me all: I can bear any intelligence but of death by human means."

"I meant not to have gone ſuch lengths; far from it; I hold duels in abhorrence, as unjuſtifiable acts of violence, and ſavage devices of revenge. I have offended againſt my own conviction,—but, tranſported with paſſion at his infamous charges, I was not maſter of my reaſon; I accuſed him of his perfidy; he denied it; I told him I had it from my father,—he changed the ſubject to pour abuſe upon him; I inſiſted on a recantation to clear you; he aſked by what right? I fiercely anſwered, by a huſband's! His countenance, then, explained at leaſt the motives of his treachery,—he loves you himſelf! he had probably ſchemed to keep you free till his wife died, and then concluded his machinations would ſecure you his own. For this purpoſe, finding he was in danger of loſing you, he was content even to blaſt your character, rather than ſuffer you to eſcape him! But the moment I acknowledged my marriage he grew more furious than myſelf; and, in ſhort—for why relate the frenzies of rage? we walked out together; my travelling piſtols were already charged; I gave him his choice of them, and, the challenge being mine, for inſolence joined with guilt had robbed me of all forbearance, he fired firſt, but

miſſed me; I then demanded whether he would clear your fame? he called out, "Fire! I will make no terms,"—I did fire,—and unfortunately aimed better! We had neither of us any ſecond, all was the reſult of immediate paſſion; but I ſoon got people to him, and aſſiſted in conveying him home. He was at firſt believed to be dead, and I was ſeized by his ſervants; but he afterwards ſhewed ſigns of life, and by ſending for my friend Biddulph, I was releaſed. Such is the melancholy tranſaction I came to relate to you, flattering myſelf it would ſomething leſs ſhock you from me than from another: yet my own real concern for the affair, the repentance with which from the moment the wretch fell, I was ſtruck in being his deſtroyer, and the ſorrow, the remorſe, rather, which I felt, in coming to wound you with ſuch black, ſuch fearful intelligence,—you to whom all I owe is peace and comfort!——theſe thoughts gave me ſo much diſturbance, that, in fact, I knew leſs than any other how to prepare you for ſuch a tale."

He ſtopt; but Cecilia could ſay nothing; to cenſure him now would both be cruel and vain; yet to pretend ſhe was ſatisfied with his conduct, would be doing violence to her judgment and veracity. She ſaw, too, that his error had ſprung wholly from a generous ardor in her defence, and that his confidence in her character, had reſiſted, without wavering,

ing, every attack that menaced it. For this ſhe felt truly grateful; yet his quarrel with his father,—the danger of his mother,—his neceſſary abſence,—her own clandeſtine ſituation,—and more than all, the threatened death of Mr. Monckton by his hands, were circumſtances ſo full of dread and ſadneſs, ſhe knew not upon which to ſpeak,—how to offer him comfort,—how to aſſume a countenance that looked able to receive any, or by what means to repreſs the emotions which ſo many ways aſſailed her. Delvile, having vainly waited ſome reply, then in a tone the moſt melancholy, ſaid, "If it is yet poſſible you can be ſufficiently intereſted in my fate to care what becomes of me, aid me now with your counſel, or rather with your inſtructions; I am ſcarce able to think for myſelf, and to be thought for by you, would yet be a conſolation that would give me ſpirit for any thing."

Cecilia, ſtarting from her reverie, repeated, "To care what becomes of you? Oh, Delvile!—make not my heart bleed by words of ſuch unkindneſs!"

"Forgive me," cried he, "I meant not a reproach; I meant but to ſtate my own conſciouſneſs how little I deſerve from you. You talked to me of going to my father? do you ſtill wiſh it?"

"I think ſo!" cried ſhe; too much diſturbed to know what ſhe ſaid, yet fearing

again to hurt him by making him wait her anſwer.

"I will go then," ſaid he, "without doubt: too happy to be guided by you, whichever way I ſteer. I have now, indeed, much to tell him; but whatever may be his wrath, there is little fear, at this time, that my own temper cannot bear it! what next ſhall I do?"

"What next?" repeated ſhe; "indeed I know not!"

"Shall I go immediately to Margate? or ſhall I firſt ride hither?"

"If you pleaſe," ſaid ſhe, much perturbed, and deeply ſighing.

"I pleaſe nothing but by your direction, to follow that is my only chance of pleaſure. Which, then, ſhall I do?—you will not, now, refuſe to direct me?"

"No, certainly, not for the world!"

"Speak to me, then, my love, and tell me;—why are you thus ſilent?—is it painful to you to counſel me?"

"No, indeed!" ſaid ſhe, putting her hand to her head, "I will ſpeak to you in a few minutes."

"Oh, my Cecilia!" cried he, looking at her with much alarm, "call back your recollection; you know not what you ſay, you take no intereſt in what you anſwer."

"Indeed I do!" ſaid ſhe, ſighing deeply, and oppreſſed beyond the power of thinking,

beyond

beyond any power but an internal conſciouſneſs of wretchedneſs.

"Sigh not ſo bitterly," cried he, "if you have any compaſſion! ſigh not ſo bitterly,—I cannot bear to hear you!"

"I am very ſorry indeed!" ſaid ſhe, ſighing again, and not ſeeming ſenſible ſhe ſpoke.

"Good Heaven?" cried he, riſing, "diſtract me not with this horror!—ſpeak not to me in ſuch broken ſentences!—Do you hear me, Cecilia?—why will you not anſwer me?"

She ſtarted and trembled, looked pale and affrighted, and putting both her hands upon her heart, ſaid, "Oh, yes!—but I have an oppreſſion here,—a tightneſs, a fullneſs,—I have not room for breath!"

"Oh, beloved of my heart!" cried he, wildly caſting himſelf at her feet, "kill me not with this terror!—call back your faculties,—awake from this dreadful inſenſibility! tell me at leaſt you know me!—tell me I have not tortured you quite to madneſs!—ſole darling of my affections! my own, my wedded Cecilia!—reſcue me from this agony! it is more than I can ſupport!—"

This energy of diſtreſs brought back her ſcattered ſenſes, ſcarce more ſtunned by the ſhock of all this miſery, than by the reſtraint of her feelings in ſtruggling to conceal it. But theſe paſſionate exclamations reſtoring her ſenſibility, ſhe burſt into tears, which happi-

ly relieved her mind from the conflict with which it was labouring, and which, not thus effected, might have ended more fatally.

Never had Delvile more rejoiced in her ſmiles than now in theſe ſeaſonable tears, which he regarded and bleſt as the preſervers of her reaſon. They flowed long without any intermiſſion, his ſoothing and tenderneſs but melting her to more ſorrow: after a while, however, the return of her faculties, which at firſt ſeemed all conſigned over to grief, was manifeſted by the returning ſtrength of her mind: ſhe blamed herſelf ſeverely for the little fortitude ſhe had ſhewn, but having now given vent to emotions too forcible to be wholly ſtifled, ſhe aſſured him he might depend upon her better courage for the future, and entreated him to conſider and ſettle his affairs.

Not ſpeedily, however, could Delvile himſelf recover. The torture he had ſuffered in believing, though only for a few moments, that the terror he had given to Cecilia had affected her intellects, made even a deeper impreſſion upon his imagination, than the ſcene of fury and death, which had occaſioned that terror: and Cecilia, who now ſtrained every nerve to repair by her firmneſs, the pain which by her weakneſs ſhe had given him, was ſooner in a condition for reaſoning and deliberation than himſelf.

"Ah,

"Ah, Delvile!" ſhe cried, comprehending what paſſed within him, "do you allow nothing for ſurpriſe? and nothing for the hard conflict of endeavouring to ſuppreſs it? do you think me ſtill as unfit to adviſe with, and as worthleſs, as feeble a counſellor, as during the firſt confuſion of my mind."

"Hurry not your tender ſpirits, I beſeech you," cried he, "we have time enough; we will talk about buſineſs by and by."

"What time?" cried ſhe, "what is it now o'clock?"

"Good Heaven!" cried he, looking at his watch, "already paſt ten! you muſt turn me out, my Cecilia, our calumny will ſtill be buſy, even though poor Monckton is quiet."

"I *will* turn you out," cried ſhe; "I am indeed moſt earneſt to have you gone. But tell me your plan, and which way you mean to go?"

"That," he anſwered, "you ſhall decide for me yourſelf: whether to Delvile Caſtle, to finiſh one tale, and wholly communicate another, or to Margate, to haſten my mother abroad, before the news of this calamity reaches her."

"Go to Margate," cried ſhe, eagerly; "ſet off this very moment! you can write to your father from Oſtend. But continue, I conjure you, on the Continent, till we ſee if this unhappy man lives, and enquire, of thoſe

who can judge, what muſt follow if he ſhould not!"

"A trial," ſaid he, "muſt follow, and it will go, I fear, but hardly with me! the challenge was mine; his ſervants can all witneſs I went to him, not he to me.—Oh, my Cecilia! the raſhneſs of which I have been guilty, is ſo oppoſite to my principles, and, all generous as is your ſilence, I know it ſo oppoſite to your's, that never, ſhould his blood be on my hands, wretch as he was, never will my heart be quiet more!"

"He will live, he will live!" cried Cecilia, repreſſing her horror, "fear nothing, for he will live;—and as to his wound and his ſufferings, his perfidy has deſerved them. Go, then, to Margate; think only of Mrs. Delvile, and ſave her, if poſſible, from hearing what has happened."

"I will go—ſtay—do which and whatever you bid me: but, ſhould what I fear come to paſs, ſhould my mother continue ill, my father inflexible, ſhould this wretched man die, and ſhould England no longer be a country I ſhall love to dwell in,—could you, then, bear to own,—would you, then, conſent to follow me?—"

"Could I?—am I not your's? may you not command me? tell me, then,—you have only to ſay,—ſhall I accompany you at once?"

Delvile, affected by her generoſity, could ſcarce utter his thanks; yet he did not heſi-

tate

tate in denying to avail himſelf of it; "No, my Cecilia," he cried, "I am not ſo ſelfiſh. If we have not happier days, we will at leaſt wait for more deſperate neceſſity. With the uncertainty if I have not this man's life to anſwer for at the hazard of my own, to take my wife — my bride, — from the kingdom I muſt fly!—to make her a fugitive and an exile in the firſt publiſhing that ſhe is mine! No, if I am not a deſtined alien for life I can never permit it. Nothing leſs, believe me, ſhall ever urge my conſent to wound the chaſte propriety of your character, by making you an eloper with a duelliſt."

They then again conſulted upon their future plans: and concluded that in the preſent diſordered ſtate of their affairs, it would be beſt not to acknowledge even to Mr. Delvile their marriage, to whom the news of the duel, and Mr. Monckton's danger would be a blow ſo ſevere, that, to add to it any other might half diſtract him.

To the few people already acquainted with it, Delvile therefore determined to write from Oſtend, re-urging his entreaties for their diſcretion and ſecreſy. Cecilia promiſed every poſt to acquaint him how Mr. Monckton went on, and ſhe then beſought him to go inſtantly, that he might out travel the ill news to his mother.

He complied, and took leave of her in the tendereſt manner, conjuring her to ſupport her

ſpirits, and be careful of her health. "Happineſs," ſaid he, "is much in arrears with us, and though my violence may have frightened it away, your ſweetneſs and gentleneſs will yet attract it back: all that for me is in ſtore muſt be received at your hands,—what is offered in any other way, I ſhall only miſtake for evil! droop not, therefore, my generous Cecilia, but in yourſelf preſerve me!"

"I will not droop," ſaid ſhe; "you will find, I hope, you have not intruſted yourſelf in ill hands."

"Peace then be with you, my love!—my comforting, my ſoul-reviving Cecilia! Peace, ſuch as angels give, and ſuch as may drive from your mind the remembrance of this bitter hour!"

He then tore himſelf away.

Cecilia, who to his bleſſings could almoſt, like the tender Belvidera, have exclaimed,

O do not leave me!—ſtay with me and curſe me!

liſtened to his ſteps till ſhe could hear them no longer, as if the remaining moments of her life were to be meaſured by them: but then, remembering the danger both to herſelf and him of his ſtay, ſhe endeavoured to rejoice that he was gone, and, but that her mind was in no ſtate for joy, was too rational not to have ſucceeded.

Grief

Grief and horror for what was paſt, apprehenſion and ſuſpenſe for what was to come, ſo diſordered her whole frame, ſo confuſed even her intellects, that when not all the aſſiſtance of fancy could perſuade her ſhe ſtill heard the footſteps of Delvile, ſhe went to the chair upon which he had been ſeated, and taking poſſeſſion of it, ſat with her arms croſſed, ſilent, quiet, and erect, almoſt vacant of all thought, yet with a ſecret idea ſhe was doing ſomething right.

Here ſhe continued till Henrietta came to wiſh her good night; whoſe ſurpriſe and concern at the ſtrangeneſs of her look and attitude, once more recovered her. But terrified herſelf at this threatened wandering of her reaſon, and certain ſhe muſt all night be a ſtranger to reſt, ſhe accepted the affectionate offer of the kind hearted girl to ſtay with her, who was too much grieved for her grief to ſleep any more than herſelf.

She told her not what had paſſed; that, ſhe knew, would be fruitleſs affliction to her: but ſhe was ſoothed by her gentleneſs, and her converſation was ſome ſecurity from the dangerous rambling of her ideas.

Henrietta herſelf found no little conſolation in her own private ſorrows, that ſhe was able to give comfort to her beloved Miſs Beverley, from whom ſhe had received favours and kind offices innumerable. She quitted her not night nor day, and in the honeſt pride of a little

power, to ſhew the gratefulneſs of her heart, ſhe felt a pleaſure and ſelf-conſequence ſhe had never before experienced.

CHAP. III.

A SUMMONS.

CECILIA's earlieſt care, almoſt at break of day, was to ſend to the Grove; from thence ſhe heard nothing but evil; Mr. Monckton was ſtill alive, but with little or no hope of recovery, conſtantly delirious, and talking of Miſs Beverley, and of her being married to young Delvile.

Cecilia, who knew well this, at leaſt, was no delirium, though ſhocked that he talked of it, hoped his danger leſs than was apprehended.

The next day, however, more fatal news was brought her, though not from the quarter ſhe expected it. Mr. Monckton, in one of his raving fits, had ſent for Lady Margaret to his bed ſide, and uſed her almoſt inhumanly: he had railed at her age and infirmities with incredible fury, called her the cauſe of all his ſufferings, and accuſed her as the immediate agent of Lucifer in his preſent wound and

and danger. Lady Margaret, whom neither jealouſy nor malignity had cured of loving him, was diſmayed and affrighted; and in hurrying out of the room upon his attempting, in his frenzy, to ſtrike her, ſhe dropt down dead in an apoplectic fit.

"Good Heaven!" thought Cecilia, "what an exemplary puniſhment has this man! he loſes his hated wife at the very moment when her death could no longer anſwer his purpoſes! Poor Lady Margaret! her life has been as bitter as her temper! married from a view of intereſt, ill uſed as a bar to happineſs, and deſtroyed from the fruitleſs ravings of deſpair!"

She wrote all this intelligence to Oſtend, whence ſhe received a letter from Delvile, acquainting her he was detained from proceeding further by the weakneſs and illneſs of his mother, whoſe ſufferings from ſeaſickneſs had almoſt put an end to her exiſtence.

Thus paſſed a miſerable week; Monckton ſtill merely alive, Delvile detained at Oſtend, and Cecilia tortured alike by what was recently paſſed, actually preſent, and fearfully expected; when one morning ſhe was told a gentleman upon buſineſs deſired immediately to ſpeak with her.

She haſtily obeyed the ſummons; the conſtant image of her own mind, Delvile, being already preſent to her, and a thouſand wild con-

conjectures upon what had brought him back, rapidly occurring to her.

Her expectations, however, were ill anſwered, for ſhe found an entire ſtranger; an elderly man, of no pleaſant aſpect or manners.

She deſired to know his buſineſs.

"I preſume, madam, you are the lady of this houſe?"

She bowed an aſſent.

"May I take the liberty, madam, to aſk your name?"

"My name, Sir?"

"You will do me a favour, madam, by telling it me."

"Is it poſſible you are come hither without already knowing it?"

"I know it only by common report, madam."

"Common report, Sir, I believe is ſeldom wrong in a matter where to be right is ſo eaſy."

"Have you any objection, madam, to telling me your name!"

"No, Sir; but your buſineſs can hardly be very important, if you are yet to learn whom you are to addreſs. It will be time enough, therefore, for us to meet when you are elſewhere ſatisfied in this point."

She would then have left the room.

"I beg, madam," cried the ſtranger, "you will have patience; it is neceſſary, before I can

can open my buſineſs, that I ſhould hear your name from yourſelf."

"Well, Sir," cried ſhe, with ſome heſitation, "you can ſcarce have come to this houſe, without knowing that its owner is Cecilia Beverley."

"That, madam, is your maiden name."

"My maiden name?" cried ſhe, ſtarting.

"Are you not married, madam?"

"Married, Sir?" ſhe repeated, while her cheeks were the colour of ſcarlet.

"It is, properly, therefore, madam, the name of your huſband that I mean to aſk."

"And by what authority, Sir," cried ſhe, equally aſtoniſhed and offended, "do you make theſe extraordinary enquiries?"

"I am deputed, madam, to wait upon you by Mr. Eggleſton, the next heir to this eſtate, by your uncle's will, if you die without children, or change your name when you marry. His authority of enquiry, madam, I preſume you will allow, and he has veſted it in me by a letter of attorney."

Cecilia's diſtreſs and confuſion were now unſpeakable; ſhe knew not what to own or deny, ſhe could not conjecture how ſhe had been betrayed, and ſhe had never made the ſmalleſt preparation againſt ſuch an attack.

"Mr. Eggleſton, madam," he continued, "has been pretty credibly informed that you

you are actually married: he is very desirous, therefore, to know what are your intentions; for your continuing to be called *Miss* Beverley, as if still single, leaves him quite in the dark: but, as he is so deeply concerned in the affair, he expects, as a lady of honour, you will deal with him without prevarication."

"This demand, Sir," said Cecilia, stammering, "is so extremely—so—little expected—"

"The way, madam, in these cases, is to keep pretty closely to the point; are you married or are you not?"

Cecilia, quite confounded, made no answer: to disavow her marriage, when thus formally called upon, was every way unjustifiable; to acknowledge it in her present situation, would involve her in difficulties innumerable.

"This is not, madam, a slight thing; Mr. Eggleston has a large family and a small fortune, and that, into the bargain, very much encumbered; it cannot, therefore, be expected that he will knowingly connive at cheating himself, by submitting to your being actually married, and still enjoying your estate, though your husband does not take your name."

Cecilia, now, summoning more presence of mind, answered, "Mr. Eggleston, Sir, has, at least, nothing to fear from imposition: those with

with whom he has, or may have any tranſactions in this affair, are not accuſtomed to practiſe it."

"I am far from meaning any offence, madam; my commiſſion from Mr. Eggleſton is ſimply this, to beg you will ſatisfy him upon what grounds you now evade the will of your late uncle, which, till cleared up, appears a point manifeſtly to his prejudice."

"Tell him, then, Sir, that whatever he wiſhes to know ſhall be explained to him in about a week. At preſent I can give no other anſwer."

"Very well, madam; he will wait that time, I am ſure, for he does not wiſh to put you to any inconvenience. But when he heard the gentleman was gone abroad without owning his marriage, he thought it high time to take ſome notice of the matter."

Cecilia, who by this ſpeech found ſhe was every way diſcovered, was again in the utmoſt confuſion, and with much trepidation ſaid, "ſince you ſeem ſo well, Sir, acquainted with this affair, I ſhould be glad you would inform me by what means you came to the knowledge of it?"

"I heard it, madam, from Mr. Eggleſton himſelf, who has long known it."

"Long, Sir?—impoſſible! when it is not yet a fortnight—not ten days, or no more, that——"

She Stopt, recollecting ſhe was making a confeſſion better deferred.

"That,

"That, madam," he anſwered, "may perhaps bear a little contention: for when this buſineſs comes to be ſettled, it will be very eſſential to be exact as to the time, even to the very hour; for a large income per annum, divides into a ſmall one per diem; and if your huſband keeps his own name, you muſt not only give up your uncle's inheritance from the time of relinquiſhing yours, but refund from the very day of your marriage."

"There is not the leaſt doubt of it" anſwered ſhe; "nor will the ſmalleſt difficulty be made."

"You will pleaſe, then, to recollect, madam, that this ſum is every hour encreaſing; and has been ſince laſt September, which made half a year accountable for laſt March. Since then there is now added——"

"Good Heaven, Sir," cried Cecilia, "what calculation are you making out? do you call laſt week laſt September?"

"No, madam; but I call laſt September the month in which you were married."

"You will find yourſelf, then, Sir, extremely miſtaken; and Mr. Eggleſton is preparing himſelf for much diſappointment, if he ſuppoſes me ſo long in arrears with him."

"Mr. Eggleſton, madam, happens to be well informed of this tranſaction, as, if there is any diſpute in it, you will find. He was your immediate ſucceſſor in the houſe to which you went laſt September in Pall-Mall; the woman

who

who kept it acquainted his ſervants that the laſt lady who hired it ſtaid with her but a day, and only came to town, ſhe found, to be married: and hearing, upon enquiry, this lady was Miſs Beverley, the ſervants, well knowing that their maſter was her conditional heir, told him the circumſtance."

"You will find all this, Sir, end in nothing."

"That, madam, as I ſaid before, remains to be proved. If a young lady, at eight o'clock in the morning, is ſeen—and ſhe was ſeen, going into a church with a young gentleman, and one female friend; and is afterwards obſerved to come out of it, followed by a clergyman and another perſon, ſuppoſed to have officiated as father, and is ſeen get into a coach with the ſame young gentleman, and ſame female friend, why the circumſtances are pretty ſtrong!—"

"They may ſeem ſo, Sir; but all concluſions drawn from them will be erroneous. I was not married then, upon my honour!"

"We have little, madam, to do with profeſſions; the circumſtances are ſtrong enough to bear a trial, and——"

"A trial!——"

"We have traced, madam, many witneſſes able to ſtand to divers particulars; and eight months ſhare of ſuch an eſtate as this, is well worth a little trouble."

"I am amazed, Sir! ſurely Mr. Eggleſton never deſired you to make uſe of this language to me?"

"Mr.

"Mr. Eggleſton, madam, has behaved very honourably; though he knew the whole affair ſo long ago, he was perſuaded Mr. Delvile had private reaſons for a ſhort concealment; and expecting every day when they would be cleared up by his taking your name, he never interfered: but being now informed he ſet out laſt week for the Continent, he has been adviſed by his friends to claim his rights."

"That claim, Sir, he need not fear will be ſatisfied; and without any occaſion for threats of enquiries or law ſuits."

"The truth, madam, is this; Mr. Eggleſton is at preſent in a little difficulty about ſome money matters, which makes it a point with him of ſome conſequence to have the affair ſettled ſpeedily: unleſs you could conveniently compromiſe the matter, by advancing a particular ſum, till it ſuits you to refund the whole that is due to him, and quit the premiſes."

"Nothing, Sir, is due to him! at leaſt, nothing worth mentioning. I ſhall enter into no terms, for I have no compromiſe to make. As to the premiſes, I will quit them with all the expedition in my power."

"You will do well, madam; for the truth is, it will not be convenient to him to wait much longer."

He then went away.

"When, next," cried Cecilia, "ſhall I again be weak, vain, blind enough to form any plan with

with a hope of ſecreſy? or enter, with *any* hope, into a clandeſtine ſcheme! betrayed by thoſe I have truſted, diſcovered by thoſe I have not thought of, expoſed to the cruelleſt alarms, and defenceleſs from the moſt ſhocking attacks!—Such has been the life I have led ſince the moment I firſt conſented to a private engagement!—Ah, Delvile! your mother, in her tenderneſs, forgot her dignity, or ſhe would not have concurred in an action which to ſuch diſgrace made me liable!"

CHAP. IV.

A Deliberation.

IT was neceſſary, however, not to moralize, but to act; Cecilia had undertaken to give her anſwer in a week, and the artful attorney had drawn from her an acknowledgement of her ſituation, by which he might claim it yet ſooner.

The law-ſuit with which ſhe was threatened for the arrears of eight months, alarmed her not, though it ſhocked her, as ſhe was certain ſhe could prove her marriage ſo much later.

It was eaſy to perceive that this man had been ſent with a view of working from her a confeſſion,

confeſſion, and terrifying from her ſome money; the confeſſion, indeed, in conſcience and honeſty ſhe could not wholly elude, but ſhe had ſuffered too often by a facility in parting with money to be there eaſily duped.

Nothing, however, was more true, than that ſhe now lived upon an eſtate of which ſhe no longer was the owner, and that all ſhe either ſpent or received was to be accounted for and returned, ſince by the will of her uncle, unleſs her huſband took her name, her eſtate on the very day of her marriage was to be forfeited, and entered upon by the Eggleſtons. Delvile's plan and hope of ſecreſy had made them little weigh this matter, though this premature diſcovery ſo unexpectedly expoſed her to their power.

The firſt thought that occurred to her, was to ſend an expreſs to Delvile, and deſire his inſtructions how to proceed: but ſhe dreaded his impetuoſity of temper, and was almoſt certain that the inſtant he ſhould hear ſhe was in any uneaſineſs or perplexity, he would return to her at all hazards, even though Mr. Monckton were dead, and his mother herſelf dying. This ſtep, therefore, ſhe did not dare riſk, preferring any perſonal hardſhip, to endangering the already precarious life of Mrs. Delvile, or to haſtening her ſon home while Mr. Monckton was in ſo deſperate a ſituation.

But though what to avoid was eaſy to ſettle, what to ſeek was difficult to deviſe. She had

now

now no Mrs. Charlton to receive her, nor a creature in whom ſhe could confide. To continue her preſent way of living was deeply involving Delvile in debt, a circumſtance ſhe had never conſidered, in the confuſion and hurry attending all their plans and converſations, and a circumſtance which, though to him it might have occurred, he could not in common delicacy mention.

Yet to have quitted her houſe, and retrenched her expences, would have raiſed ſuſpicions that muſt have anticipated the diſcovery ſhe ſo much wiſhed to have delayed. That wiſh, by the preſent danger of its failure, was but more ardent; to have her affairs and ſituation become publicly known at the preſent period, ſhe felt would half diſtract her.—Privately married, parted from her huſband at the very moment of their union, a huſband by whoſe hand the apparent friend of her earlieſt youth was all but killed, whoſe father had execrated the match, whoſe mother was now falling a ſacrifice to the vehemence with which ſhe had oppoſed it, and who himſelf, little ſhort of an exile, knew not yet if, with perſonal ſafety, he might return to his native land!

To circumſtances ſo dreadful, ſhe had now the additional ſhock of being uncertain whether her own houſe might not be ſeized, before any other could be prepared for her reception!

Yet ſtill whither to go, what to do, or what to reſolve, ſhe was wholly unable to determine; and

and after meditating almoſt to madneſs in the ſearch of ſome plan or expedient, ſhe was obliged to give over the attempt, and be ſatisfied with remaining quietly where ſhe was, till ſhe had better news from Delvile of his mother, or better news to ſend him of Mr. Monckton; carefully, mean time, in all her letters avoiding to alarm him by any hint of her diſtreſs.

Yet was ſhe not idle, either from deſpair or helpleſſneſs: ſhe found her difficulties encreaſed, and ſhe called forth more reſolution to combat them: ſhe animated herſelf by the promiſe ſhe had made Delvile, and recovering from the ſadneſs to which ſhe had at firſt given way, ſhe now exerted herſelf with vigour to perform it as ſhe ought.

She began by making an immediate inſpection into her affairs, and endeavouring, where expence ſeemed unneceſſary, to leſſen it. She gave Henrietta to underſtand ſhe feared they muſt ſoon part; and ſo afflicted was the unhappy girl at the news, that ſhe found it the moſt cruel office ſhe had to execute. The ſame intimation ſhe gave to Mrs. Harrel, who repined at it more openly, but with a ſelfiſhneſs ſo evident that it blunted the edge of pity. She then announced to Albany her inability to purſue, at preſent, their extenſive ſchemes of benevolence; and though he inſtantly left her, to carry on his laborious plan elſewhere, the reverence ſhe had now excited in him of her character, made him leave her with no ſenſation

but

but of regret, and readily promiſe to return when her affairs were ſettled, or her mind more compoſed.

Theſe little preparations, which were all ſhe could make, with enquiries after Mr. Monckton, and writing to Delvile, ſufficiently filled up her time, though her thoughts were by no means confined to them. Day after day paſſed, and Mr. Monckton continued to linger rather than live; the letters of Delvile, ſtill only dated from Oſtend, contained the moſt melancholy complaints of the illneſs of his mother; and the time advanced when her anſwer would be claimed by the attorney.

The thought of ſuch another viſit was almoſt intolerable; and within two days of the time that ſhe expected it, ſhe reſolved to endeavour herſelf to prevail with Mr. Eggleſton, to wait longer.

Mr. Eggleſton was a gentleman whom ſhe knew little more than by ſight; he was no relation to her family, nor had any connection with the Dean, but by being a couſin to a lady he had married, and who had left him no children. The Dean had no particular regard for him, and had rather mentioned him in his will as the ſucceſſor of Cecilia, in caſe ſhe died unmarried or changed her name, as a mark that he approved of her doing neither, than as a matter he thought probable, if even poſſible, to turn out in his favour.

He was a man of a large family, the ſons of which, who were extravagant and diſſipated, had much impaired his fortune by prevailing with him to pay their debts, and much diſtreſſed him in his affairs by ſucceſsfully teaſing him for money.

Cecilia, acquainted with theſe circumſtances, knew but too well with what avidity her eſtate would be ſeized by them, and how little the ſons would endure delay, even if the father conſented to it. Yet ſince the ſacrifice to which ſhe had agreed muſt ſoon make it indiſputably their own, ſhe determined to deal with them openly; and acknowledged, therefore, in her letter, her marriage without diſguiſe, but begged their patience and ſecreſy, and promiſed, in a ſhort time, the moſt honourable retribution and ſatisfaction.

She ſent this letter by a man and horſe, Mr. Eggleſton's habitation being within fifteen miles of her own.

The anſwer was from his eldeſt ſon, who acquainted her that his father was very ill, and had put all his affairs into the hands of Mr. Carn, his attorney, who was a man of great credit, and would ſee juſtice done on all ſides.

If this anſwer, which ſhe broke open the inſtant ſhe took it into her hand, was in itſelf a cruel diſappointment to her, how was that diſappointment embittered by ſhame and ter-

ror,

ror, when, upon again folding it up, ſhe ſaw it was directed to Mrs. Mortimer Delvile!

This was a deciſive ſtroke; what they wrote to her, ſhe was ſure they would mention to all others; ſhe ſaw they were too impatient for her eſtate to be moved by any repreſentations to a delay, and that their eagerneſs to publiſh their right, took from them all conſideration of what they might make her ſuffer. Mr. Eggleſton, ſhe found, permitted himſelf to be wholly governed by his ſon; his ſon was a needy and profligate ſpendthrift, and by throwing the management of the affair into the hands of an attorney, craftily meant to ſhield himſelf from the future reſentment of Delvile, to whom, hereafter, he might affect, at his convenience, to diſapprove Mr. Carn's behaviour, while Mr. Carn was always ſecure, by averring he only exerted himſelf for the intereſt of his client.

The diſcerning Cecilia, though but little experienced in buſineſs, and wholly unſuſpicious by nature, yet ſaw into this management, and doubted not theſe excuſes were already arranged. She had only, therefore, to ſave herſelf an actual ejectment, by quitting a houſe in which ſhe was expoſed to ſuch a diſgrace.

But ſtill whither to go ſhe knew not! One only attempt ſeemed in her power for an honourable aſylum, and that was more irkſomely painful to her than ſeeking ſhelter in the

meaneſt retreat: it was applying to Mr. Delvile, ſenior.

The action of leaving her houſe, whether quietly or forcibly, could not but inſtantly authenticate the report ſpread by the Eggleſtons of her marriage: to hope therefore for ſecreſy any longer would be folly, and Mr. Delvile's rage at ſuch intelligence might be ſtill greater to hear it by chance than from herſelf. She now lamented that Delvile had not at once told the tale, but, little foreſeeing ſuch a diſcovery as the preſent, they had mutually concluded to defer the communication till his return.

Her own anger at the contemptuous ill treatment ſhe had repeatedly met from him, ſhe was now content not merely to ſuppreſs but to diſmiſs, ſince, as the wife of his ſon, without his conſent, ſhe conſidered herſelf no longer as wholly innocent of incurring it.—Yet, ſuch was her dread of his auſterity and the arrogance of his reproaches, that, by choice, ſhe would have preferred an habitation with her own penſioner, the pew-opener, to the grandeſt apartment of Delvile Caſtle, while he continued its lord.

In her preſent ſituation, however, her choice was little to be conſulted: the honour of Delvile was concerned in her eſcaping even temporary diſgrace, and nothing, ſhe knew, would ſo much gratify him, as any attention from her to his father. She wrote to him, therefore,

fore the following letter, which ſhe ſent by an expreſs.

To the Hon. COMPTON DELVILE.

SIR,

April 29th, 1780.

I ſhould not, even by letter, preſume thus to force myſelf upon your remembrance, did I not think it a duty I now owe your ſon, both to riſk and to bear the diſpleaſure it may unhappily occaſion. After ſuch an acknowledgment, all other confeſſion would be ſuperfluous; and uncertain as I am if you will ever deign to own me, more words than are neceſſary would be merely impertinent.

It was the intention of your ſon, Sir, when he left the kingdom, to ſubmit wholly to your arbitration, at his return, which ſhould be reſigned, his own name or my fortune:—but his requeſt for your deciſion, and his ſupplication for your forgiveneſs are both, moſt unfortunately, prevented, by a premature and unforeſeen diſcovery of our ſituation, which renders an immediate determination abſolutely unavoidable.

At this diſtance from him, I cannot, in time, receive his directions upon the meaſures I have to take; pardon me then, Sir, if, well knowing my reference to him will not be more implicit than his own to you, I venture, in

the preſent important criſis of my affairs, to entreat thoſe commands inſtantly, by which I am certain of being guided ultimately.

I would commend myſelf to your favour, but that I dread exciting your reſentment. I will detain you, therefore, only to add, that the father of Mr. Mortimer Delvile, will ever meet the moſt profound reſpect from her who, without his permiſſion, dares ſign no name to the honour ſhe now has in declaring herſelf,

his moſt humble,

and moſt obedient ſervant.

Her mind was ſomewhat eaſier when this letter was written, becauſe ſhe thought it a duty, yet felt reluctance in performing it.—She wiſhed to have repreſented to him ſtrongly the danger of Delvile's hearing her diſtreſs, but ſhe knew ſo well his inordinate ſelf-ſufficiency, ſhe feared a hint of that ſort might be conſtrued into an inſult, and concluded her only chance that he would do any thing, was by leaving wholly to his own ſuggeſtions the weighing and ſettling, what.

But though nothing was more uncertain than whether ſhe ſhould be received at Delvile Caſtle, nothing was more fixed than that ſhe muſt quit her own houſe, ſince the pride of Mr. Delvile left not even a chance that his intereſt would conquer it. She deferred not, therefore, any longer making preparations for her

her removal, though wholly unſettled whither.

Her firſt, which was alſo her moſt painful taſk, was to acquaint Henrietta with her ſituation: ſhe ſent, therefore, to deſire to ſpeak with her, but the countenance of Henrietta ſhewed her communication would not ſurpriſe her.

"What is the matter with my dear Henrietta?" cried Cecilia, "who is it has already afflicted that kind heart which I am now compelled to afflict for myſelf?"

Henrietta, in whom anger appeared to be ſtruggling with ſorrow, anſwered, "No, madam, not afflicted for *you!* it would be ſtrange if I were, thinking as I think!"

"I am glad," ſaid Cecilia, calmly, "if you are not, for I would give to you, were it poſſible, nothing but pleaſure and joy."

"Ah, madam!" cried Henrietta, burſting into tears, "why will you ſay ſo when you don't care what becomes of me! when you are going to caſt me off!—and when you will ſoon be too happy ever to think of me more!"

"If I am never happy till then," ſaid Cecilia, "ſad, indeed, will be my life! no, my gentleſt friend, you will always have your ſhare in my heart; and always, to me, would have been the welcomeſt gueſt in my houſe, but for thoſe unhappy circumſtances which make our ſeparating inevitable."

"Yet you ſuffered me, madam, to hear from any body that you was married and going away; and all the common ſervants in the houſe knew it before me."

"I am amazed!" ſaid Cecilia, "how and which way can they have heard it?"

"The man that went to Mr. Eggleſton brought the firſt news of it, for he ſaid all the ſervants there talked of nothing elſe, and that their maſter was to come and take poſſeſſion here next Thurſday."

Cecilia ſtarted at this moſt unwelcome intelligence: "Yet you envy me," ſhe cried, "Henrietta, though I am forced from my houſe! though in quitting it, I am unprovided with any other, and though him for whom I relinquiſh it, is far off, without means of protecting, or power of returning to me!"

"But you are married to him, madam!" cried ſhe, expreſſively.

"True, my love; but, alſo, I am parted from him!"

"Oh, how differently," exclaimed Henrietta, "do the great think from the little! were *I* married,—and *ſo* married, I ſhould want neither houſe, nor fine cloaths, nor riches, nor any thing;—I ſhould not care where I lived,—every place would be a paradiſe! I would walk to him barefoot if he were a thouſand miles off, and I ſhould mind nobody

body elſe in the world while I had him to take care of me!"

Ah Delvile! thought Cecilia, what powers of faſcination are yours! ſhould I be tempted to repine at what I have to bear, I will think of this heroic girl and bluſh!

Mrs. Harrel now broke in upon them, eager to be informed of the truth or falſehood of the reports which were buzzed throughout the houſe. Cecilia briefly related to them both the ſtate of her affairs, earneſtly expreſſing her concern at the abrupt ſeparation which muſt take place, and for which ſhe had been unable to prepare them, as the circumſtances which led to it had been wholly unforeſeen by herſelf.

Mrs. Harrel liſtened to the account with much curioſity and ſurpriſe; but Henrietta wept inceſſantly in hearing it: the object of a paſſion ardent as it was romantic, loſt to her paſt recovery; torn herſelf, probably for ever, from the beſt friend ſhe had in the world; and obliged to return thus ſuddenly to an home ſhe deteſted.—Henrietta poſſeſſed not the fortitude to hear evils ſuch as theſe, which, to her inexperienced heart, appeared the ſevereſt that could be inflicted.

This converſation over, Cecilia ſent for her ſteward, and deſired him, with the utmoſt expedition, to call in all her bills, and inſtantly to go round to her tenants within twenty miles, and gather in, from thoſe who

were able to pay, the arrears now due to her; charging him, however, upon no account, to be urgent with ſuch as ſeemed diſtreſſed.

The bills ſhe had to pay were collected without difficulty; ſhe never owed much, and creditors are ſeldom hard of acceſs; but the money ſhe hoped to receive fell very ſhort of her expectations, for the indulgence ſhe had ſhewn to her tenants had ill prepared them for ſo ſudden a demand.

CHAP. V.

A DECISION.

THIS buſineſs effectually occupied the preſent and following day; the third, Cecilia expected her anſwer from Delvile Caſtle, and the viſit ſhe ſo much dreaded from the attorney.

The anſwer arrived firſt.

To Miſs BEVERLEY.

Madam,

As my ſon has never apprized me of the extraordinary ſtep which your letter intimates, I am too unwilling to believe him capable of ſo far forgetting what he owes his family, to ratify

ratify any ſuch intimation by interfering with my counſel or opinion.

I am, Madam, &c.

COMPTON DELVILE.

DELVILE CASTLE,
May 1ſt, 1780.

Cecilia had little right to be ſupriſed by this letter, and ſhe had not a moment to comment upon it, before the attorney arrived.

"Well, Madam," ſaid the man, as he entered the parlour, "Mr. Eggleſton has ſtayed your own time very patiently: he commiſſions me now to enquire if it is convenient to you to quit the premiſes."

"No, Sir, it is by no means convenient to me; and if Mr. Eggleſton will wait ſome time longer, I ſhall be greatly obliged to him."

"No doubt, madam, but he will, upon proper conſiderations."

"What, Sir, do you call proper?"

"Upon your advancing to him, as I hinted before, an immediate particular ſum from what muſt, by and bye, be legally reſtituted."

"If this is the condition of his courteſy, I will quit the houſe without giving him farther trouble."

"Juſt as it ſuits you, madam. He will be glad to take poſſeſſion to-morrow or next day."

"You did well, Sir, to commend his patience! I ſhall, however, merely diſcharge my ſervants, and ſettle my accounts, and be ready to make way for him."

"You will not take it amiſs, madam, if I remind you that the account with Mr. Eggleſton muſt be the firſt that is ſettled."

"If you mean the arrears of this laſt fortnight or three weeks, I believe I muſt deſire him to wait Mr. Delvile's return, as I may otherwiſe myſelf be diſtreſſed for ready money."

"That, madam, is not likely, as it is well known you have a fortune that was independent of your late uncle; and as to diſtreſs for ready money, it is a plea Mr. Eggleſton can urge much more ſtrongly."

"This is being ſtrangely haſty, Sir!—ſo ſhort a time as it is ſince Mr. Eggleſton could expect *any* part of this eſtate!"

"That, madam, is nothing to the purpoſe; from the moment it is his, he has as many wants for it as any other gentleman. He deſired me, however, to acquaint you, that if you ſtill choſe an apartment in this houſe, till Mr. Delvile returns, you ſhall have one at your ſervice."

"To be a *gueſt* in this houſe, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, drily, "might perhaps ſeem ſtrange to

to me; I will not, therefore, be ſo much in his way."

Mr. Carn then informed her, ſhe might put her ſeal upon whatever ſhe meant hereafter to claim or diſpute, and took his leave.

Cecilia now ſhut herſelf up in her own room, to meditate without interruption, before ſhe would proceed to any action. She felt much inclination to ſend inſtantly for ſome lawyer, but when ſhe conſidered her peculiar ſituation, the abſence of her huſband, the renunciation of his father, the loſs of her fortune, and her ignorance upon the ſubject, ſhe thought it better to reſt quiet till Delvile's own fate, and own opinion could be known, than to involve herſelf in a lawſuit ſhe was ſo little able to ſuperintend.

In this cruel perplexity of her mind and her affairs, her firſt thought was to board again with Mrs. Bayley; but that was ſoon given up, for ſhe felt a repugnance unconquerable to continuing in her native county, when deprived of her fortune, and caſt out of her dwelling. Her ſituation, indeed, was ſingularly unhappy, ſince, by this unforeſeen viciſſitude of fortune, ſhe was ſuddenly, from being an object of envy and admiration, ſunk into diſtreſs, and threatened with diſgrace; from being every where careſſed, and by every voice praiſed, ſhe bluſhed to be ſeen, and expected to be cenſured; and, from being generally regarded as an example of happineſs,

and

and a model of virtue, ſhe was now in one moment to appear to the world, an outcaſt from her own houſe, yet received into no other? a bride, unclaimed by a huſband! an HEIRESS, diſpoſſeſſed of all wealth!

To be firſt acknowledged as *Mrs. Delvile* in a ſtate ſo degrading, ſhe could not endure; and to eſcape from it, one way alone remained, which was going inſtantly abroad.

Upon this, therefore, ſhe finally determined: her former objections to ſuch a ſtep being now wholly, though unpleaſantly removed, ſince ſhe had neither eſtate nor affairs to demand her ſtay, and ſince all hopes of concealment were totally at an end. Her marriage, therefore, and its diſgraceful conſequences being publiſhed to the world, ſhe reſolved without delay to ſeek the only aſylum which was proper for her, in the protection of the huſband for whom ſhe had given up every other.

She purpoſed, therefore, to go immediately and privately to London, whence ſhe could beſt ſettle her route for the Continent: where ſhe hoped to arrive before the news of her diſtreſs reached Delvile, whom nothing, ſhe was certain, but her own preſence, could keep there for a moment after hearing it.

Thus decided, at length, in her plan, ſhe proceeded to put it in execution with calmneſs and intrepidity; comforting herſelf that the conveniencies and indulgencies with which ſhe

ſhe was now parting, would ſoon be reſtored to her, and though not with equal power, with far more ſatisfaction. She told her ſteward her deſign of going the next morning to London, bid him pay inſtantly all her debts, and diſcharge all her ſervants, determining to keep no account open but that with Mr. Eggleſton, which he had made ſo intricate by double and undue demands, that ſhe thought it moſt prudent and ſafe to leave him wholly to Delvile.

She then packed up all her papers and letters, and ordered her maid to pack up her clothes.

She next put her own ſeal upon her cabinets, drawers, and many other things, and employed almoſt all her ſervants at once, in making complete inventories of what every room contained.

She adviſed Mrs. Harrel to ſend without delay for Mr. Arnott, and return to his houſe. She had firſt purpoſed to carry Henrietta home to her mother herſelf; but another ſcheme for her now occurred, from which ſhe hoped much future advantage to the amiable and dejected girl.

She knew well, that deep as was at preſent her deſpondency, the removal of all poſſibility of hope, by her knowledge of Delvile's marriage, muſt awaken her before long from the deluſive viſions of her romantic fancy; Mr. Arnott

Arnott himſelf was in a ſituation exactly ſimilar, and the knowledge of the ſame event would probably be productive of the ſame effect. When Mrs. Harrel, therefore, began to repine at the ſolitude to which ſhe was returning, Cecilia propoſed to her the ſociety of Henrietta, which, glad to catch at any thing that would break into her lonelineſs, ſhe liſtened to with pleaſure, and ſeconded by an invitation.

Henrietta, to whom all houſes appeared preferable to her own home, joyfully accepted the offer, committing to Cecilia the communication of the change of her abode to Mrs. Belfield.

Cecilia, who in the known and tried honour of Mr. Arnott, would unreluctantly have truſted a ſiſter, was much pleaſed by this little arrangement, from which, ſhould no good enſue, no evil, at leaſt, was probable. But ſhe hoped, through the mutual pity their mutual melancholy might inſpire, that their minds, already not diſſimilar, would be ſoftened in favour of each other, and that, in concluſion, each might be happy in receiving the conſolation each could give, and a union would take place, in which their reciprocal diſappointment might, in time, be nearly forgotten.

There was not, indeed, much promiſe of ſuch an event in the countenance of Mr. Arnott, when, late at night, he came for his ſiſter,

ſiſter, nor in the unbounded ſorrow of Henrietta, when the moment of leave-taking arrived. Mr. Arnott looked half dead with the ſhock his ſiſter's intelligence had given him, and Henrietta's heart, torn aſunder between friendſhip and love, was ſcarce able to bear a parting, which from Cecilia, ſhe regarded as eternal, added to the conſciouſneſs it was occaſioned by her going to join Delvile for life!

Cecilia, who both read and pitied theſe conflicting emotions, was herſelf extremely hurt by this neceſſary ſeparation. She tenderly loved Henrietta, ſhe loved her even the more for the ſympathy of their affections, which called forth the moſt forcible commiſeration, that which ſprings from fellow-feeling!

"Farewel," ſhe cried, "my Henrietta, be but happy as you are innocent, and be both as I love you, and nothing will your friends have to wiſh for you, or yourſelf to regret."

"I muſt always regret," cried the ſobbing Henrietta, "that I cannot live with you for ever! I ſhould regret it if I were queen of all the world, how much more then, when I am nothing and nobody! I do not wiſh *you* happy, madam, for I think happineſs was made on purpoſe for you, and nobody elſe ever had it before; I only wiſh you health and long life, for the ſake of thoſe who will be made as happy as you,—for you will ſpoil them,—as you have ſpoilt me,——from being ever happy without you!"

Cecilia

Cecilia re-iterated her aſſurances of a moſt faithful regard, embraced Mrs. Harrel, ſpoke words of kindneſs to the drooping Mr. Arnott, and then parted with them all.

Having ſtill many ſmall matters to ſettle, and neither company nor appetite, ſhe would eat no ſupper; but, in paſſing through the hall, in her way to her own room, ſhe was much ſurpriſed to ſee all her domeſtics aſſembled in a body. She ſtopt to enquire their intention, when they eagerly preſſed forward, humbly and earneſtly entreating to know why they were diſcharged?

"For no reaſon in the world," cried Cecilia, "but becauſe it is at preſent out of my power to keep you any longer."

"Don't part with *me*, madam, for that," cried one of them, "for I will ſerve you for nothing!"

"So will I!" cried another, "And I!" "And I!" was echoed by them all; "while no other ſuch miſtreſs is to be found!" "We can never bear any other place!" and "keep *me*, madam, at leaſt!" was even clamorouſly urged by each of them.

Cecilia, diſtreſſed and flattered at once by their unwillingneſs to quit her, received this teſtimony of gratitude for the kind and liberal treatment they had received, with the warmeſt thanks both for their ſervices and fidelity, and aſſured them that when again ſhe was ſettled, all thoſe who ſhould be yet unprovided

provided with places, ſhould be preferred in her houſe before any other claimants.

Having, with difficulty, broken from them, ſhe ſent for her own man, Ralph, who had lived with her many years before the death of the Dean, and told him ſhe meant ſtill to continue him in her ſervice. The man heard it with great delight, and promiſed to re-double his diligence to deſerve her favour. She then communicated the ſame news to her maid, who had alſo reſided with her ſome years, and by whom with the ſame, or more pleaſure, it was heard.

Theſe and other regulations employed her almoſt all night; yet late and fatigued as ſhe went to bed, ſhe could not cloſe her eyes: fearful ſomething was left undone, ſhe robbed herſelf of the ſhort time ſhe had allowed to reſt, by inceſſant meditation upon what yet remained to be executed. She could recollect, however, one only thing that had eſcaped her vigilance, which was acquainting the pew-opener, and two or three other poor women who had weekly penſions from her, that they muſt, at leaſt for the preſent, depend no longer upon her aſſiſtance.

Nothing indeed could be more painful to her than giving them ſuch information, yet not to be ſpeedy with it would double the barbarity of their diſappointment. She even felt for theſe poor women, whoſe loſs in her ſhe knew would be irreparable, a compaſſion that

that drove from her mind almoſt every other ſubject, and determined her, in order to ſoften to them this misfortune, to communicate it herſelf, that ſhe might prevent their ſinking under it, by reviving them with hopes of her future aſſiſtance.

She had ordered at ſeven o'clock in the morning an hired chaiſe at the door, and ſhe did not ſuffer it long to wait for her. She quitted her houſe with a heart full of care and anxiety, grieving at the neceſſity of making ſuch a ſacrifice, uncertain how it would turn out, and labouring under a thouſand perplexities with reſpect to the meaſures ſhe ought immediately to take. She paſſed, when ſhe reached the hall, through a row of weeping domeſtics, not one of whom with dry eyes could ſee the houſe bereft of ſuch a miſtreſs. She ſpoke to them all with kindneſs, and as much as was in her power with chearfulneſs: but the tone of her voice gave them little reaſon to think the concern at this journey was all their own.

She ordered her chaiſe to drive round to the pew-opener's, and thence to the reſt of her immediate dependents. She ſoon, however, regretted that ſhe had given herſelf this taſk; the affliction of theſe poor penſioners was clamourous, was almoſt heart-breaking; they could live, they ſaid, no longer, they were ruined for ever; they ſhould ſoon be without bread to eat, and they might cry for help

help in vain, when their generous, their only benefactreſs was far away!

Cecilia made the kindeſt efforts to comfort and encourage them, aſſuring them the very moment her own affairs were arranged, ſhe would remember them all, viſit them herſelf, and contribute to their relief, with all the power ſhe ſhould have left. Nothing, however, could conſole them; they clung about her, almoſt took the horſes from the chaiſe, and conjured her not to deſert thoſe who were ſolely cheriſhed by her bounty!

Nor was this all ſhe had to ſuffer; the news of her intention to quit the county was now reported throughout the neighbourhood, and had ſpread the utmoſt conſternation among the poor in general, and the lower claſs of her own tenants in particular, and the road was ſoon lined with women and children, wringing their hands and crying. They followed her carriage with ſupplications that ſhe would return to them, mixing bleſſings with their lamentations, and prayers for her happineſs with the bittereſt repinings at their own loſs!

Cecilia was extremely affected; her liberal and ever-ready hand was every other inſtant involuntarily ſeeking her purſe, which her many immediate expences, made her prudence as often check: and now firſt ſhe felt the capital error ſhe had committed, in

living

living conſtantly to the utmoſt extent of her income, without ever preparing, though ſo able to have done it, againſt any unfortunate contingency.

When ſhe eſcaped, at laſt, from receiving any longer this painful tribute to her benevolence, ſhe gave orders to her man to ride forward, and ſtop at the Grove, that a preciſe and minute account of Mr. Monckton, might be the laſt, as it was now become the moſt important news ſhe ſhould hear in Suffolk. This he did, when to her equal ſurpriſe and delight, ſhe heard that he was ſuddenly ſo much better, there were hopes of his recovery.

Intelligence ſo joyful made her amends for almoſt every thing; yet ſhe heſitated not in her plan of going abroad, as ſhe knew not where to be in England, and could not endure to hurry Delvile from his ſick mother, by acquainting him with her helpleſs and diſtreſſed ſituation. But ſo revived were her ſpirits by theſe unexpected tidings, that a gleam of brighteſt hope once more danced before her eyes, and ſhe felt herſelf invigorated with freſh courage and new ſtrength, ſufficient to ſupport her through all hardſhips and fatigues.

Spirits and courage were indeed much wanted for the enterpriſe ſhe had formed; but little uſed to travelling, and having never been out of England, ſhe knew nothing of the

the route but by a general knowledge of geography, which, though it could guide her eaſt or weſt, could teach her nothing of foreign cuſtoms, the preparations neceſſary for the journey, the impoſitions ſhe ſhould guard againſt, nor the various dangers to which ſhe might be expoſed, from total ignorance of the country through which ſhe had to paſs.

Conſcious of theſe deficiencies for ſuch an undertaking, ſhe deliberated without intermiſſion how to obviate them. Yet ſometimes, when to theſe hazards, thoſe ariſing from her youth and ſex were added, ſhe was upon the point of relinquiſhing her ſcheme, as too perilous for execution, and reſolving to continue privately in London till ſome change happened in her affairs.

But though to every thing ſhe could ſuggeſt, doubts and difficulties aroſe, ſhe had no friend to conſult, nor could deviſe any means by which they might be terminated. Her maid was her only companion, and Ralph, who had ſpent almoſt his whole life in Suffolk, her only guard and attendant. To hire immediately ſome French ſervant, uſed to travelling in his own country, ſeemed the firſt ſtep ſhe had to take, and ſo eſſential, that no other appeared feaſible till it was done. But where to hear of ſuch a man ſhe could not tell, and to take one not

not well recommended, would be expoſing herſelf to frauds and dangers innumerable.

Yet ſo ſlow as Delvile travelled, from whom her laſt letter was ſtill dated Oſtend, ſhe thought herſelf almoſt certain, could ſhe once reach the Continent, of overtaking him in his route within a day or two of her landing.

The earneſt inclination with which this ſcheme was ſeconded, made her every moment leſs willing to forego it. It ſeemed the only harbour for her after the ſtorm ſhe had weathered, and the only refuge ſhe could properly ſeek while thus houſeleſs and helpleſs. Even were Delvile in England, he had no place at preſent to offer her, nor could any thing be propoſed ſo unexceptionable as her living with Mrs. Delvile at Nice, till he knew his father's pleaſure, and, in a ſeparate journey home, had arranged his affairs either for her return, or her continuance abroad.

With what regret did ſhe now look back to the time when, in a diſtreſs ſuch as this, ſhe ſhould have applied for, and received the advice of Mr. Monckton, as oracular! The loſs of a counſellor ſo long, ſo implicitly relied upon, loſt to her alſo, only by his own intereſted worthleſſneſs, ſhe felt almoſt daily, for almoſt daily ſome intricacy or embarraſſment made her miſs his aſſiſtance: and though glad, ſince ſhe found him ſo undeſerving, that ſhe had eſcaped the

ſnares

ſnares he had ſpread for her, ſhe grieved much that ſhe knew no man of honeſt character and equal abilities, that would care for her ſufficiently to ſupply his place in her confidence.

As ſhe was ſituated at preſent, ſhe could think only of Mr. Belfield to whom ſhe could apply for any advice. Nor even to him was the application unexceptionable, the calumnies of Mr. Delvile ſenior, making it diſagreeable to her, even to ſee him. But he was at once a man of the world and a man of honour; he was the friend of Mortimer, whoſe confidence in him was great, and his own behaviour had uniformly ſhewn a reſpect far removed from impertinence or vanity, and a mind ſuperior to being led to them by the influence of his groſs mother. She had, indeed, when ſhe laſt quitted his houſe, determined never to re-enter it; but determinations haſty or violent, are rarely obſerved, becauſe rarely practicable; ſhe had promiſed Henrietta to inform Mrs. Belfield whither ſhe was gone, and reconcile her to the abſence ſhe ſtill hoped to make from home. She concluded, therefore, to go to Portland-Street without delay, and enquire openly and at once whether, and when, ſhe might ſpeak with Mr. Belfield; reſolving, if tormented again by any forward inſinuations, to rectify all miſtakes by acknowledging her marriage.

She gave directions accordingly to the poſtboy and Ralph.

With reſpect to her own lodgings while in town, as money was no longer unimportant to her, ſhe meant from the Belfields to go to the Hills, by whom ſhe might be recommended to ſome reputable and cheap place. To the Belfields, however, though very late when ſhe arrived in town, ſhe went firſt, unwilling to loſe a moment in promoting her ſcheme of going abroad.

She left her maid in the chaiſe, and ſent Ralph on to Mrs. Hill, with direction to endeavour immediately to procure her a lodging.

CHAP. VI.

A PARTING.

CECILIA was ſhewn into a parlour, where Mrs. Belfield was very earneſtly diſcourſing with Mr. Hobſon and Mr. Simkins; and Belfield himſelf, to her great ſatisfaction, was already there, and reading.

"Lack-a-day!" cried Mrs. Belfield, "if one does not always ſee the people one's talking of! Why it was but this morning, madam, I was ſaying to Mr. Hobſon, I wonder, ſays I, a young lady of ſuch fortunes as Miſs Beverley

Beverley ſhould mope herſelf up ſo in the country! Don't you remember it, Mr. Hobſon?"

"Yes, mádam," anſwered Mr. Hobſon, "but I think, for my part, the young lady's quite in the right to do as ſhe's a mind; for that's what I call living agreeable: and if I was a young lady to-morrow, with ſuch fine fortunes, and that, it's juſt what I ſhould do myſelf: for what I ſay is this; where's the joy of having a little money, and being a little matter above the world, if one has not one's own will?"

"Ma'am," ſaid Mr. Simkins, who had ſcarce yet raiſed his head from the profoundneſs of his bow upon Cecilia's entrance into the room, "if I may be ſo free, may I make bold juſt for to offer you this chair?"

"I called, madam," ſaid Cecilia, ſeizing the firſt moment in her power to ſpeak, "in order to acquaint you that your daughter, who is perfectly well, has made a little change in her ſituation, which ſhe was anxious you ſhould hear from myſelf."

"Ha! ha! ſtolen a match upon you, I warrant!" cried the facetious Mr. Hobſon, "a good example for you, young lady, and if you take my advice, you won't be long before you follow it; for as to a lady, let her be worth never ſo much, ſhe's a mere nobody, as one may ſay, till ſhe can get herſelf a huſband, being ſhe knows nothing of buſineſs,

and is made to pay for every thing through the noſe."

"Fie, Mr. Hobſon, fie!" ſaid Mr. Simkins, "to talk ſo ſlighting of the ladies before their faces! what one ſays in a corner is quite of another nature; but for to talk ſo rude in their company,—I thought you would ſcorn to do ſuch a thing."

"Sir, I don't want to be rude no more than yourſelf," ſaid Mr. Hobſon; "for what I ſay is, rudeneſs is a thing that makes nobody agreeable; but I don't ſee becauſe of that, why a man is not to ſpeak his mind to a lady as well as to a gentleman, provided he does it in a complaiſant faſhion."

"Mr. Hobſon," cried Mrs. Belfield, very impatiently, "you might as well let *me* ſpeak, when the matter is all about my own daughter."

"I aſk pardon, ma'am," ſaid he, "I did not mean to ſtop you; ſo as to not letting a lady ſpeak, one might as well tell a man in buſineſs not to look at the Daily Advertiſer; why, it's morally impoſſible!"

"But ſure, madam," cried Mrs. Belfield, "it's no ſuch thing? You can't have got her off already?"

I would I had! thought Cecilia; who then explained her meaning; but in talking of Mrs. Harrel, avoided all mention of Mr. Arnott, well foreſeeing that to hear ſuch a man exiſted, and was in the ſame houſe with her daughter,

daughter, would be ſufficient authority to her ſanguine expectations, for depending upon a union between them, and reporting it among her friends.

This circumſtance being made clear, Cecilia added, "I could by no means have conſented voluntarily to parting ſo ſoon with Miſs Belfield, but that my own affairs call me at preſent out of the kingdom." And then, addreſſing herſelf to Belfield, ſhe enquired if he could recommend to her a truſty foreign ſervant, who would be hired only for the time ſhe was to ſpend abroad?

While Belfield was endeavouring to recollect ſome ſuch perſon, Mr. Hobſon eagerly called, out "As to going abroad, madam, to be ſure you're to do as you like, for that, as I ſay, is the ſoul of every thing; but elſe I can't ſay it's a thing I much approve; for my notion is this; here's a fine fortune, got as a man may ſay, out of the bowels of one's mother country, and this fine fortune, in default of male iſſue, is obliged to come to female, the law making no proviſo to the contrary. Well, this female, going into a ſtrange country, naturally takes with her this fortune, by reaſon it's the main article ſhe has to depend upon; what's the upſhot? why ſhe gets pilfered by a ſet of ſharpers that never ſaw England in their lives, and that never loſe ſight of her till ſhe has not a ſous in the world. But the hardſhip of the thing is this; when it's

all gone, the lady can come back, but will the money come back?—No, you'll never ſee it again: now this is what I call being not a true patriot."

"I am quite aſhamed for to hear you talk ſo, Mr. Hobſon!" cried Mr. Simkins, affecting to whiſper; "to go for to take a perſon to taſk at this rate, is behaving quite unbearable; it's enough to make the young lady afraid to ſpeak before you."

"Why, Mr. Simkins," anſwered Mr. Hobſon, "truth is truth, whether one ſpeaks it or not; and that, ma'am, I dare ſay, a young lady of your good ſenſe knows as well as myſelf."

"I think, madam," ſaid Belfield, who waited their ſilence with great impatience, "that I know juſt ſuch a man as you will require, and one upon whoſe honeſty I believe you may rely."

"That's more," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "than I would take upon me to ſay for any *Engliſhman*; where you may meet with ſuch a *Frenchman*, I won't be bold to ſay."

"Why, indeed," ſaid Mr. Simkins, "if I might take the liberty for to put in, though I don't mean in no ſhape to go to contradicting the young gentleman; but if I was to make bold to ſpeak my private opinion upon the head, I ſhould be inclinable for to ſay, that as to putting a dependance upon the French, it's a thing quite dubious how it may turn out."

"I take

"I take it as a great favour, ma'am," ſaid Mrs. Belfield, "that you have been ſo complaiſant as to make me this viſit to-night, for I was almoſt afraid you would not have done me the favour any more; for, to be ſure, when you was here laſt, things went a little unlucky: but I had no notion, for my part, who the old gentleman was till after he was gone, when Mr. Hobſon told me it was old Mr. Delvile: though, ſure enough, I thought it rather upon the extraordinary order, that he ſhould come here into my parlour, and make ſuch a ſecret of his name, on purpoſe to aſk me queſtions about my own ſon."

"Why, I think, indeed, if I may be ſo free," ſaid Mr. Simkins, "it was rather petickeler of the gentleman; for, to be ſure, if he was ſo over curious to hear about your private concerns, the genteel thing, if I may take the liberty for to differ, would have been for him to ſay, Ma'am, ſays he, I'm come to aſk the favour of you juſt to let me a little into your ſon's goings on; and any thing, ma'am, you ſhould take a fancy for to aſk me upon the return, why I ſhall be very compliable, ma'am, ſays he, to giving of you ſatisfaction."

"I dare ſay," anſwered Mrs. Belfield, "he would not have ſaid ſo much if you'd have gone down on your knees to aſk him. Why he was upon the very point of being quite in a paſſion becauſe I only aſked him his name! though what harm that could do him, I'm

ſure I never could gueſs. However, as he was ſo mighty inquiſitive about my ſon, if I had but known who he was in time, I ſhould have made no ſcruple in the world to aſk him if he could not have ſpoke a few words for him to ſome of thoſe great people that could have done him ſome good. But the thing that I believe put him ſo out of humour, was my being ſo unlucky as to ſay, before ever I knew who he was, that I had heard he was not over and above good-natured; for I ſaw he did not ſeem much to like it at the time."

"If he had done the generous thing," ſaid Mr. Simkins, "it would have been for him to have made the proffer of his ſervices of his own free-will; and it's rather ſurpriſeable to me he ſhould never have thought of it; for what could be ſo natural as for him to ſay, I ſee, ma'am, ſays he, you've got a very likely young gentleman here, that's a little out of caſh, ſays he, ſo I ſuppoſe, ma'am, ſays he, a place, or a penſion, or ſomething in that ſhape of life, would be no bad compliment, ſays he."

"But no ſuch good luck as that will come to my ſhare," cried Mrs. Belfield, "I can tell you that, for every thing I want to do goes quite contrary. Who would not have thought ſuch a ſon as mine, though I ſay it before his face, could not have made his fortune long ago, living as he did, among all the great folks, and

dining

dining at their table juſt like one of themſelves? yet, for all that, you ſee they let him go on his own way, and think of him no more than of nobody! I'm ſure they might be aſhamed to ſhow their faces, and ſo I ſhould tell them at once, if I could but get ſight of them."

"I don't mean, ma'am," ſaid Mr. Simkins, "for to be finding fault with what you ſay, for I would not be unpelite in no ſhape; but if I might be ſo free as for to differ a little bit, I muſt needs ſay I am rather for going to work in anotherguefs ſort of a manner; and if I was as you—"

"Mr. Simkins," interrupted Belfield, "we will ſettle this matter another time." And then turning to the wearied Cecilia, "The man, madam," he ſaid, "whom I have done myſelf the honour to recommend to you, I can ſee to-morrow morning; may I then tell him to wait upon you?"

"I aſk pardon for juſt putting in," cried Mr. Simkins, before Cecilia could anſwer, and again bowing down to the ground, "but I only mean to ſay I had no thought for to be impertinent, for as to what I was a going to remark, it was not of no conſequence in the leaſt."

"It is a great piece of luck, ma'am," ſaid Mrs. Belfield, "that you ſhould happen to come here, of a holiday! If my ſon had not been at home, I ſhould have been ready to cry for a week: and you might come any day

the year through but a Sunday, and not meet with him any more than if he had never a home to come to."

"If Mr. Belfield's home viſits are ſo periodical," ſaid Cecilia, "it muſt be rather leſs, than more, difficult to meet with him."

"Why you know, ma'am," anſwered Mrs. Belfield, "to-day is a red-letter day, ſo that's the reaſon of it."

"A red-letter day?"

"Good lack, madam, why have not you heard that my ſon is turned book-keeper?"

Cecilia, much ſurpriſed, looked at Belfield, who, colouring very high, and apparently much provoked by his mother's loquacity, ſaid, "had Miſs Beverley not heard it even now, madam, I ſhould probably have loſt with her no credit."

"You can ſurely loſe none, Sir," anſwered Cecilia, "by an employment too little pleaſant to have been undertaken from any but the moſt laudable motives."

"It is not, madam, the employment," ſaid he, "for which I ſo much bluſh, as for the perſon employed—for *myſelf!* In the beginning of the winter you left me juſt engaged in another buſineſs, a buſineſs with which I was madly delighted, and fully perſuaded I ſhould be enchanted for ever;—now, again, in the beginning of the ſummer,—you find me, already, in a new occupation!"

"I am ſorry," ſaid Cecilia, "but far indeed from

from ſurpriſed, that you found yourſelf deceived by ſuch ſanguine expectations."

"Deceived!" cried he, with energy, "I was bewitched, I was infatuated! common ſenſe was eſtranged by the ſeduction of a chimera; my underſtanding was in a ferment from the ebullition of my imagination! But when this new way of life loſt its novelty, — novelty! that ſhort-liv'd, but exquiſite bliſs! no ſooner caught than it vaniſhes, no ſooner taſted than it is gone! which charms but to fly, and comes but to deſtroy what it leaves behind!—when that was loſt, reaſon, cool, heartleſs reaſon, took its place, and teaching me to wonder at the frenzy of my folly, brought me back to the tameneſs—the ſadneſs of reality!"

"I am ſure," cried Mrs. Belfield, "whatever it has brought you back to, it has brought you back to no good! it's a hard caſe, you muſt needs think, madam, to a mother, to ſee a ſon that might do whatever he would, if he'd only ſet about it, contenting himſelf with doing nothing but ſcribble and ſcribe one day, and when he gets tired of that, thinking of nothing better than caſting up two and two!"

"Why, madam," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "what I have ſeen of the world is this; there's nothing methodizes a man but buſineſs. If he's never ſo much upon the ſtilts, that's always a ſure way to bring him down, by reaſon he ſoon finds there's nothing to be got by rhodomontading. Let every man be his own carver;

but what I ſay is, them gentlemen that are what one may call geniuſes, commonly think nothing of the main chance, till they get a tap on the ſhoulder with a writ; and a ſolid lad, that knows three times five is fifteen, will get the better of them in the long-run. But as to arguing with gentlemen of that ſort, where's the good of it? You can never bring them to the point, ſay what you will; all you can get from them, is a farrago of fine words, that you can't underſtand without a dictionary."

"I am inclinable to think," ſaid Mr. Simkins, "that the young gentleman is rather of opinion to like pleaſure better than buſineſs; and, to be ſure, it's very excuſable of him, becauſe it's more agreeabler. And I muſt needs ſay, if I may be ſo free, I'm partly of the young gentleman's mind, for buſineſs is a deal more trouble."

"I hope, however," ſaid Cecilia to Belfield, "your preſent ſituation is leſs irkſome to you?"

"Any ſituation, madam, muſt be leſs irkſome than that which I quitted: to write by rule, to compoſe by neceſſity, to make the underſtanding, nature's firſt gift, ſubſervient to intereſt, that meaneſt offspring of art!—when weary, liſtleſs, ſpiritleſs, to rack the head for invention, the memory for images, and the fancy for ornament and alluſion; and when the mind is wholly occupied by its own affections and affairs, to call forth all its faculties

for

for foreign ſubjects, unintereſting diſcuſſions, or fictitious incident!——Heavens! what a life of ſtruggle between the head and the heart! how cruel, how unnatural a war between the intellects and the feelings!"

"As to theſe ſort of things," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, "I can't ſay I am much verſed in them, by reaſon they are things I never much ſtudied; but if I was to ſpeak my notion, it is this; the beſt way to thrive in the world is to get money; but how is it to be got? Why by buſineſs: for buſineſs is to money, what fine words are to a lady, ſure road to ſucceſs. Now I don't mean by this to be cenſorious upon the ladies, being they have nothing elſe to go by; for as to examining if a man knows any thing of the world, and that, they have nothing whereby to judge, knowing nothing of it themſelves. So that when they are taken in by rogues and ſharpers, the fault is all in the law, for making no proviſo againſt their having money in their own hands. Let every one be truſted according to their head-piece: and what I ſay is this: a lady in them caſes is much to be pitied, for ſhe is obligated to take a man upon his own credit, which is tantamount to no credit at all, being what man will ſpeak an ill word of himſelf? you may as well expect a bad ſhilling to cry out don't take me! That's what I ſay, and that's my way of giving my vote."

Cecilia, quite tired of theſe interruptions, and impatient to be gone, now ſaid to Belfield,

"I

"I ſhould be much obliged to you, Sir, if you could ſend to me the man you ſpeak of to-morrow morning. I wiſhed, alſo, to conſult you with regard to the route I ought to take. My purpoſe is to go to Nice, and as I am very deſirous to travel expeditiouſly, you may perhaps be able to inſtruct me what is the beſt method for me to purſue."

"Come, Mr. Hobſon and Mr. Simkins," cried Mrs. Belfield, with a look of much ſignificance and delight, "ſuppoſe you two and I was to walk into the next room? There's no need for us to hear all the young lady may have a mind to ſay."

"She has nothing to ſay, madam," cried Cecilia, "that the whole world may not hear. Neither is it my purpoſe to talk but to liſten, if Mr Belfield is at leiſure to favour me with his advice."

"I muſt always be at leiſure, and always be proud, madam," Belfield began, when Hobſon, interrupting him, ſaid, "I aſk pardon, Sir, for intruding, but I only mean to wiſh the young lady good night. As to interfering with buſineſs, that's not my way, for it's not the right method, by reaſon——"

"We will liſten to your reaſon, Sir," cried Belfield, "ſome other time; at preſent we will give you all credit for it unheard."

"Let every man ſpeak his own maxim, Sir," cried Hobſon; "for that's what I call fair arguing: but as to one perſon's ſpeaking, and

and then making an anſwer for another into the bargain, why it's going to work no how; you may as well talk to a counter, and think becauſe you make a noiſe upon it with your own hand, it gives you the reply."

"Why, Mr. Hobſon," cried Mrs. Belfield, "I am quite aſhamed of you for being ſo dull! don't you ſee my ſon has ſomething to ſay to the lady that you and I have no buſineſs to be meddling with?"

"I am ſure, ma'am, for my part," ſaid Mr. Simkins, "I'm very agreeable to going away; for as to putting the young lady to the bluſh, it's what I would not do in no ſhape."

"I only mean," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, when he was interrupted by Mrs. Belfield, who, out of all patience, now turned him out of the room by the ſhoulders, and, pulling Mr. Simkins after, followed herſelf, and ſhut the door; though Cecilia, much provoked, deſired ſhe would ſtay, and declared repeatedly that all her buſineſs was public.

Belfield, who had looked ready to murder them all during this ſhort ſcene, now approached Cecilia, and with an air of mingled ſpirit and reſpect, ſaid, "I am much grieved, much confounded, madam, that your ears ſhould be offended by ſpeeches ſo improper to reach them; yet if it is poſſible I can have the honour of being of any uſe to you; in me, ſtill I hope, you feel you may confide. I am too diſtant from you in ſituation to apprehend I can form any ſiniſter views in ſerving you; and,

permit

permit me to add, I am too near you in mind, ever to give you the pain of bidding me remember that diſtance."

Cecilia then, extremely unwilling to ſhock a ſenſibility not more generous than jealous, determined to continue her enquiries, and, at the ſame time, to prevent any farther miſapprehenſion, by revealing her actual ſituation.

"I am ſorry, Sir," ſhe anſwered, "to have occaſioned this diſturbance; Mrs. Belfield, I find is wholly unacquainted with the circumſtance which now carries me abroad, or it would not have happened."—

Here a little noiſe in the paſſage interrupting her, ſhe heard Mrs. Belfield, though in a low voice, ſay, "Huſh, Sir, huſh! you muſt not come in juſt now; you've caught me, I confeſs, rather upon the liſtening order; but to tell you the truth, I did not know what might be going forward. However, there's no admittance now, I aſſure you, for my ſon's upon particular buſineſs with a lady, and Mr. Hobſon and Mr. Simkins and I, have all been as good as turned out by them but juſt now."

Cecilia and Belfield, though they heard this ſpeech with mutual indignation, had no time to mark or expreſs it, as it was anſwered without in a voice at once loud and furious, "*You*, madam, may be content to liſten here; pardon me if I am leſs humbly diſpoſed!"

And the door was abruptly opened by young Delvile!

Cecilia,

Cecilia, who half ſcreamed from exceſs of aſtoniſhment, would ſcarcely, even by the preſence of Belfield and his mother, have been reſtrained from flying to meet him, had his own aſpect invited ſuch a mark of tenderneſs; but far other was the caſe; when the door was open, he ſtopt ſhort with a look half petrified, his feet ſeeming rooted to the ſpot upon which they ſtood.

"I declare I aſk pardon, ma'am," cried Mrs. Belfield, "but the interruption was no fault of mine, for the gentleman would come in; and—"

"It is no interruption, madam;" cried Belfield, "Mr. Delvile does me nothing but honour."

"I thank you, Sir!" ſaid Delvile, trying to recover and come forward, but trembling violently, and ſpeaking with the moſt frigid coldneſs.

They were then, for a few inſtants, all ſilent; Cecilia, amazed by his arrival, ſtill more amazed by his behaviour, feared to ſpeak leſt he meant not, as yet, to avow his marriage, and felt a thouſand apprehenſions that ſome new calamity had hurried him home: while Belfield was both hurt by his ſtrangeneſs, and embarraſſed for the ſake of Cecilia; and his mother, though wondering at them all, was kept quiet by her ſon's looks.

Delvile then, ſtruggling for an appearance of more eaſe, ſaid, "I ſeem to have made a general confuſion here:—pray, I beg"—

"None

"None at all, Sir;" ſaid Belfield, and offered a chair to Cecilia.

"No, Sir," ſhe anſwered, in a voice ſcarce audible, "I was juſt going." And again rang the bell.

"I fear I hurry you, madam?" cried Delvile, whoſe whole frame was now ſhaking with uncontroulable emotion: "you are upon buſineſs—I ought to beg your pardon—my entrance, I believe, was unſeaſonable."—

"Sir!" cried ſhe, looking aghaſt at this ſpeech.

"I ſhould have been rather ſurpriſed," he added, "to have met you here, ſo late,—ſo unexpectedly,—ſo deeply engaged—had I not happened to ſee your ſervant in the ſtreet, who told me the honour I ſhould be likely to have by coming."

"Good God!—" exclaimed ſhe, involuntarily; but, checking herſelf as well as ſhe could, ſhe courteſied to Mrs. Belfield, unable to ſpeak to her, and avoiding even to look at Belfield, who reſpectfully hung back, ſhe haſtened out of the room, accompanied by Mrs. Belfield, who again began the moſt voluble and vulgar apologies for the intruſion ſhe had met with.

Delvile alſo, after a moment's pauſe, followed, ſaying, "Give me leave, madam, to ſee you to your carriage."

Cecilia then, notwithſtanding Mrs. Belfield ſtill kept talking, could no longer refrain

ſaying,

ſaying, "Good heaven, what does all this mean?"

"Rather for *me* is that queſtion," he anſwered, in ſuch agitation he could not, though he meant it, aſſiſt her into the chaiſe, "for mine, I believe, is the greater ſurpriſe!"

"What ſurpriſe;" cried ſhe, "explain, I conjure you!"

"By and bye, I will," he anſwered; "go on poſtillion."

"Where, Sir?"

"Where you came from, I ſuppoſe."

"What, Sir, back to Rumford?"

"Rumford!" exclaimed he, with encreaſing diſorder, "you came then from Suffolk hither?—from Suffolk to this very houſe?"

"Good heaven!" cried Cecilia, "come into the chaiſe, and let me ſpeak and hear to be underſtood?"

"Who is that now in it?"

"My maid."

"Your maid?—and ſhe waits for you thus at the door?"—

"What, what is it you mean?"

"Tell the man, madam, whither to go."

"I don't know myſelf—any-where you pleaſe—do you order him."

"*I* order him!——you came not hither to receive orders from *me!*——where was it you had purpoſed to reſt?"

"I don't know—I meant to go to Mrs. Hill's—I have no place taken."

"No

"No place taken!" repeated he, in a voice faultering between paſſion and grief; "you purpoſed, then, to ſtay here?—I have, perhaps, driven you away?"

"Here!" cried Cecilia, mingling, in her turn, indignation with ſurpriſe, "gracious heaven! what is it you mean to doubt?"

"Nothing!" cried he, with emphaſis, "I never *have* had, I never *will* have a doubt! I will *know*, I will have *conviction* for every thing! Poſtillion, drive to St. James's-Square!—to Mr. Delvile's. There, madam, I will wait upon you."

"No! ſtay, poſtillion!" called out Cecilia, ſeized with terror inexpreſſible; "let me get out, let me ſpeak with you at once!"

"It cannot be; I will follow you in a few minutes—drive on poſtillion!"

"No, no!—I will not go—I dare not leave you—unkind Delvile!——what is it you ſuſpect?"

"Cecilia," cried he, putting his hand upon the chaiſe-door, "I have ever believed you ſpotleſs as an angel! and, by heaven, I believe you ſo ſtill, in ſpite of appearances—in defiance of every thing!——Now then be ſatisfied;—I will be with you very ſoon.—Mean while, take this letter, I was juſt going to ſend to you.—Poſtillion, drive on, or be it at your peril!"

The man waited no farther orders, nor regarded the prohibition of Cecilia, who called out

out to him without ceaſing; but he would not liſten to her till he got to the end of the ſtreet; he then ſtopt, and ſhe broke the ſeal of her letter, and read, by the light of the lamps, enough to let her know that Delvile had written it upon the road from Dover to London, to acquaint her his mother was now better, and had taken pity of his ſuſpenſe and impatience, and inſiſted upon his coming privately to England, to ſatisfy himſelf fully about Mr. Monckton, communicate his marriage to his father, and give thoſe orders towards preparing for its being made public, which his unhappy precipitation in leaving the kingdom had prevented.

This letter, which, though written but a few hours before ſhe received it, was full of tenderneſs, gratitude, and anxiety for her happineſs, inſtantly convinced her that his ſtrange behaviour had been wholly the effect of a ſudden impulſe of jealouſy; excited by ſo unexpectedly finding her in town, at the very houſe where his father had aſſured him ſhe had an improper connection, and alone, ſo ſuſpiciouſly, with the young man affirmed to be her favourite. He knew nothing of the ejectment, nothing of any reaſon for her leaving Suffolk, every thing had the ſemblance of no motive but to indulge a private and criminal inclination.

Theſe thoughts, which confuſedly, yet forcibly, ruſhed upon her mind, brought with them

them at once an excuſe for his conduct, and an alarm for his danger; "He muſt think," ſhe cried, "I came to town only to meet Mr. Belfield!" then, opening the chaiſe-door herſelf, ſhe jumpt out, and ran back into Portland-Street, too impatient to argue with the poſtillion to return with her, and ſtopt not till ſhe came to Mrs. Belfield's houſe.

She knocked at the door with violence; Mrs. Belfield came to it herſelf; "Where," cried ſhe, haſtily entering as ſhe ſpoke, "are the gentlemen?"

"Lack-a-day! ma'am," anſwered Mrs. Belfield, "they are both gone out."

"Gone out?—where to?—which way?"

"I am ſure I can't tell, ma'am, no more than you can; but I am ſadly afraid they'll have a quarrel before they've done."

"Oh, heaven!" cried Cecilia, who now doubted not a ſecond duel, "tell me, ſhew me, which way they went?"

"Why, ma'am, to let you into the ſecret," anſwered Mrs. Belfield, "only I beg you'll take no notice of it to my ſon, but, ſeeing them ſo much out of ſorts I begged the favour of Mr. Simkins, as Mr. Hobſon was gone out to his club, juſt to follow them, and ſee what they were after."

Cecilia was much rejoiced this caution had been taken, and determined to wait his return. She would have ſent for the chaiſe to follow her, but Mrs. Belfield kept no ſervant, and

and the maid of the houſe was employed in preparing the ſupper.

When Mr. Simkins came back, ſhe learnt, after various interruptions from Mrs. Belfield, and much delay from his own ſlowneſs and circumlocution, that he had purſued the two gentlemen to the——coffee houſe.

She heſitated not a moment in reſolving to follow them: ſhe feared the failure of any commiſſion, nor did ſhe know whom to entruſt with one: and the danger was too urgent for much deliberation. She begged, therefore, that Mr. Simkins would walk with her to the chaiſe; but hearing that the coffee-houſe was another way, ſhe deſired Mrs. Belfield to let the ſervant run and order it to Mrs. Roberts's, in Fetter-lane, and then eagerly requeſted Mr. Simkins to accompany her on foot till they met with an hackney-coach.

They then ſet out, Mr. Simkins feeling proud and happy in being allowed to attend her, while Cecilia, glad of any protection, accepted his offer of continuing with her, even after ſhe met with an hackney-coach.

When ſhe arrived at the coffee-houſe, ſhe ordered the coachman to deſire the maſter of it to come and ſpeak with her.

He came, and ſhe haſtily called out, "Pray are two gentlemen here?"

"Here are ſeveral gentlemen here, madam"

"Yes,

"Yes, yes,—but are two upon any buſineſs—any particular buſineſs—"

"Two gentlemen, madam, came about half an hour ago, and aſked for a room to themſelves."

"And where are they now?—are they up ſtairs?—down ſtairs?—where are they?"

"One of them went away in about ten minutes, and the other ſoon after."

Bitterly chagrined and diſappointed, ſhe knew not what ſtep to take next; but, after ſome conſideration, concluded upon obeying Delvile's own directions, and proceeding to St. James's-Square, where alone, now, ſhe ſeemed to have any chance of meeting with him. Gladly, however, ſhe ſtill conſented to be accompanied by Mr. Simkins, for her dread of being alone, at ſo late an hour, in an hackney-coach, was invincible. Whether Delvile himſelf had any authority for directing her to his father's, or whether, in the perturbation of his new excited and agonizing ſenſations of jealouſy, he had forgotten that any authority was neceſſary, ſhe knew not; nor could ſhe now intereſt herſelf in the doubt: a ſecond ſcene, ſuch as had ſo lately paſſed with Mr. Monckton, occupied all her thoughts. She knew the too great probability that the high ſpirit of Belfield would diſdain making the explanation which Delvile in his preſent agitation might require, and the conſequence of ſuch a refuſal muſt almoſt inevitably be fatal.

CHAP. VII.

A PURSUIT.

THE moment the porter came to the door, Cecilia eagerly called out from the coach, "Is Mr. Delvile here?"

"Yes, madam," he anſwered, "but I believe he is engaged."

"Oh, no matter for any engagement!" cried ſhe, "open the door,—I muſt ſpeak to him this moment!"

"If you will pleaſe to ſtep into the parlour, madam, I will tell his gentleman you are here; but he will be much diſpleaſed if he is diſturbed without notice."

"Ah, heaven!" exclaimed ſhe, "what Mr. Delvile are you talking of?"

"My maſter, madam."

Cecilia, who had got out of the coach, now haſtily returned to it, and was ſome time in too great agony to anſwer either the porter, who deſired ſome meſſage, or the coachman, who aſked whither he was to drive. To ſee Mr. Delvile, unprotected by his ſon, and contrary to his orders, appeared to her inſupportable; yet to what place could ſhe go? where was ſhe likely to meet with Delvile? how could he find her if ſhe went to Mrs.

Hill's? and in what other houſe could ſhe at preſent claim admittance?

After a little recovering from this cruel ſhock, ſhe ventured, though in a faultering voice, to enquire whether young Mr. Delvile had been there?

"Yes, madam," the porter anſwered; "we thought he was abroad, but he called juſt now, and aſked if any lady had been at the houſe. He would not even ſtay to go up to my maſter, and we have not dared tell him of his arrival."

This a little revived her; to hear that he had actually been enquiring for her, at leaſt aſſured her of his ſafety from any immediate violence, and ſhe began to hope ſhe might now poſſibly meet with him time enough to explain all that had paſt in his abſence, and occaſioned her ſeemingly ſtrange and ſuſpicious ſituation at Belfield's. She compelled herſelf, therefore, to ſummon courage for ſeeing his father, ſince, as he had directed her to the houſe, ſhe concluded he would return there to ſeek her, when he had wandered elſewhere to no purpoſe.

She then, though with much timidity and reluctance, ſent a meſſage to Mr. Delvile to entreat a moment's audience.

An anſwer was brought her that he ſaw no company ſo late at night.

Loſing now all dread of his reproaches, in her ſuperior dread of miſſing Delvile, ſhe called

led out earneſtly to the man, "Tell him, Sir, I beſeech him not to refuſe me! tell him I have ſomething to communicate that requires his immediate attention!"

The ſervant obeyed; but ſoon returning, ſaid his maſter deſired him to acquaint her he was engaged every moment he ſtaid in town, and muſt poſitively decline ſeeing her.

"Go to him again," cried the harraſſed Cecilia, "aſſure him I come not from myſelf, but by the deſire of one he moſt values: tell him I entreat but permiſſion to wait an hour in his houſe, and that I have no other place in the world whither I can go!"

Mr. Delvile's own gentleman brought, with evident concern, the anſwer to this petition; which was, that while the Honourable Mr. Delvile was himſelf alive, he thought the deſire of any other perſon concerning his houſe, was taking with him a very extraordinary liberty; and that he was now going to bed, and had given orders to his ſervants to carry him no more meſſages whatſoever, upon pain of inſtant diſmiſſion.

Cecilia now ſeemed totally deſtitute of all reſource, and, for a few dreadful minutes, gave herſelf up to utter deſpondency: nor, when ſhe recovered her preſence of mind, could ſhe form any better plan than that of

waiting in the coach to watch the return of Delvile.

She told the coachman, therefore, to drive to a corner of the ſquare, begging Mr. Simkins to have patience, which he promiſed with much readineſs, and endeavoured to give her comfort, by talking without ceſſation.

She waited here near half an hour. She then feared the diſappointment of Delvile in not meeting her at firſt, had made him conclude ſhe meant not to obey his directions, and had perhaps urged him to call again upon Belfield, whom he might fancy privy to her non-appearance. This was new horror to her, and ſhe reſolved at all riſks to drive to Portland-Street, and enquire if Belfield himſelf was returned home. Yet, leſt they ſhould mutually be purſuing each other all night, ſhe ſtopt again at Mr. Delvile's, and left word with the porter, that if young Mr. Delvile ſhould come home, he would hear of the perſon he was enquiring for at Mrs. Roberts's in Fetter-lane. To Belfield's ſhe did not dare to direct him; and it was her intention, if there ſhe procured no new intelligence, to leave the ſame meſſage, and then go to Mrs. Roberts without farther delay. To make ſuch an arrangement with a ſervant who knew not her connection with his young maſter, was extremely repugnant to her; but the exigence was too urgent for ſcruples, and there

there was nothing to which ſhe would not have conſented, to prevent the fatal cataſtrophe ſhe apprehended.

When ſhe came to Belfield's, not daring to enter the houſe, ſhe ſent in Mr. Simkins, to deſire that Mrs. Belfield would be ſo good as to ſtep to the coach door.

"Is your ſon, madam," ſhe cried, eagerly, "come home? and is any body with him?"

"No, ma'am; he has never once been acroſs the threſhold ſince that gentleman took him out; and I am half out of my wits to think—"

"Has that gentleman," interrupted Cecilia, "been here any more?"

"Yes, ma'am, that's what I was going to tell you; he came again juſt now, and ſaid—"

"Juſt now?—good heaven!—and which way is he gone?"

"Why he is after no good, I am afraid, for he was in a great paſſion, and would hardly hear any thing I ſaid."

"Pray, pray anſwer me quick!—where, which way did he go?"

"Why, he aſked me if I knew whether my ſon was come from the * * coffee-houſe; why, ſays I, I'm ſure I can't tell, for if it had not been for Mr. Simpkins, I ſhould not ſo much as have known he ever went to the * * coffee-houſe; however, I hope he a'n't

come away, becauſe if he is, poor Miſs Beverley will have had all that trouble for nothing; for ſhe's gone after him in a prodigious hurry; and upon my only ſaying that, he ſeemed quite beſide himſelf, and ſaid, if I don't meet with your ſon at the * * coffee-houſe myſelf, pray, when he comes in, tell him I ſhall be highly obliged to him to call there; and then he went away, in as great a pet as ever you ſaw."

Cecilia liſtened to this account with the utmoſt terror and miſery; the ſuſpicions of Delvile would now be aggravated, and the meſſage he had left for Belfield, would by him be regarded as a defiance. Again, however, to the * * coffee-houſe ſhe inſtantly ordered the coach, an immediate explanation from herſelf ſeeming the only poſſible chance for preventing the moſt horrible concluſion to this unfortunate and eventful evening.

She was ſtill accompanied by Mr. Simkins, and, but that ſhe attended to nothing he ſaid, would not inconſiderably have been tormented by his converſation. She ſent him immediately into the coffee-room, to enquire if either of the gentlemen were then in the houſe.

He returned to her with a waiter, who ſaid, "One of them, madam, called again juſt now, but he only ſtopt to write a note, which he left to be given to the gentleman who

who came with him at firſt. He is but this moment gone, and I don't think he can be at the bottom of the ſtreet."

"Oh, drive then, gallop after him!"—cried Cecilia; "coachman! go this moment!"

"My horſes are tired," ſaid the man, "they have been out all day, and they will gallop no further, if I don't ſtop and give them a drink."

Cecilia, too full both of hope and impatience for this delay, forced open the door herſelf, and without ſaying another word, jumped out of the carriage, with intention to run down the ſtreet; but the coachman immediately ſeizing her, proteſted ſhe ſhould not ſtir till he was paid.

In the utmoſt agony of mind at an hindrance by which ſhe imagined Delvile would be loſt to her perhaps for ever, ſhe put her hand in her pocket, in order to give up her purſe for her liberty; but Mr. Simkins, who was making a tireſome expoſtulation with the coachman, took it himſelf, and, declaring he would not ſee the lady cheated, began a tedious calculation of his fare.

"O pay him any thing!" cried ſhe, "and let us be gone! an inſtant's delay may be fatal!"

Mr. Simkins, too earneſt to conquer the coachman to attend to her diſtreſs, continued his prolix harangue concerning a diſputed

ſhilling, appealing to ſome gathering ſpectators upon the juſtice of his cauſe; while his adverſary, who was far from ſober, ſtill held Cecilia, ſaying the coach had been hired for the lady, and he would be paid by herſelf.

"Good God!" cried the agitated Cecilia, —"give him my purſe at once!—give him every thing he deſires!"—

The coachman, at this permiſſion, encreaſed his demands, and Mr. Simkins, taking the number of his coach, proteſted he would ſummon him to the Court of Conſcience the next morning. A gentleman, who then came out of the coffee-houſe, offered to aſſiſt the lady; but the coachman, who ſtill held her arm, ſwore he would have his right.

"Let me go! let me paſs!" cried ſhe, with encreaſing eagerneſs and emotion; "detain me at your peril!—releaſe me this moment!—only let me run to the end of the ſtreet,—good God! good Heaven! detain me not for mercy!"

Mr. Simkins, humbly deſiring her not to be in haſte, began a formal apology for his conduct; but the inebriety of the coachman became evident; a mob was collecting; Cecilia, breathleſs with vehemence and terror, was encircled, yet ſtruggled in vain to break away; and the ſtranger gentleman, proteſting, with ſundry compliments, he would himſelf

ſelf take care of her, very freely ſeized her hand.

This moment, for the unhappy Cecilia, teemed with calamity; ſhe was wholly overpowered; terror for Delvile, horror for herſelf, hurry, confuſion, heat, and fatigue, all aſſailing her at once, while all means of repelling them were denied her, the attack was too ſtrong for her fears, feelings, and faculties, and her reaſon ſuddenly, yet totally failing her, ſhe madly called out, "He will be gone! he will be gone! and I muſt follow him to Nice!"

The gentleman now retreated; but Mr. Simkins, who was talking to the mob, did not hear her; and the coachman, too much intoxicated to perceive her riſing frenzy, perſiſted in detaining her.

"I am going to France!" cried ſhe, ſtill more wildly, "why do you ſtop me? he will die if I do not ſee him, he will bleed to death!"

The coachman, ſtill unmoved, began to grow very abuſive; but the ſtranger, touched by compaſſion, gave up his attempted gallantry, and Mr. Simkins, much aſtoniſhed, entreated her not to be frightened: ſhe was, however, in no condition to liſten to him; with a ſtrength hitherto unknown to her, ſhe forcibly diſengaged herſelf from her perſecutors; yet her ſenſes were wholly diſordered; ſhe forgot her ſituation, her intention, and herſelf;

ſelf; the ſingle idea of Delvile's danger took ſole poſſeſſion of her brain, though all connection with its occaſion was loſt, and the moment ſhe was releaſed, ſhe fervently claſped her hands, exclaiming, "I will yet heal his wound, even at the hazard of my life!" and ſpringing forward, was almoſt inſtantly out of ſight.

Mr. Simkins, now, much alarmed, and earneſtly calling after her, entered into a compromiſe with the coachman, that he might attend her; but the length of his negociation defeated its purpoſe, and before he was at liberty to follow her, all trace was loſt by which he might have overtaken her. He ſtopt every paſſenger he met to make enquiries, but tho' they led him on ſome way, they led him on in vain; and, after a uſeleſs and ill-managed purſuit, he went quietly to his own home, determining to acquaint Mrs. Belfield with what had happened the next morning.

Mean while the frantic Cecilia eſcaped both purſuit and inſult by the velocity of her own motion. She called aloud upon Delvile as ſhe flew to the end of the ſtreet. No Delvile was there!—ſhe turned the corner; yet ſaw nothing of him; ſhe ſtill went on, though unknowing whither, the diſtraction of her mind every inſtant growing greater, from the inflammation of fatigue, heat, and diſappointment. She was ſpoken to repeatedly; ſhe was even caught once or twice by her riding habit;

habit; but ſhe forced herſelf along by her own vehement rapidity, not hearing what was ſaid, not heeding what was thought. Delvile, bleeding by the arm of Belfield, was the image before her eyes, and took ſuch full poſſeſſion of her ſenſes, that ſtill, as ſhe ran on, ſhe fancied it in view. She ſcarce touched the ground; ſhe ſcarce felt her own motion; ſhe ſeemed as if endued with ſupernatural ſpeed, gliding from place to place, from ſtreet to ſtreet, with no conſciouſneſs of any plan, and following no other direction than that of darting forward wherever there was moſt room, and turning back when ſhe met with any obſtruction; till quite ſpent and exhauſted, ſhe abruptly ran into a yet open ſhop, where, breathleſs and panting, ſhe ſunk upon the floor, and, with a look diſconſolate and helpleſs, ſat for ſome time without ſpeaking.

The people of the houſe, concluding at firſt ſhe was a woman of the town, were going roughly to turn her out; but ſoon ſeeing their miſtake, by the evident diſtraction of her air and manner, they enquired of ſome idle people who, late as it was, had followed her, if any of them knew who ſhe was, or whence ſhe came?

They could give no account of her, but ſuppoſed ſhe was broke looſe from Bedlam.

Cecilia then, wildly ſtarting up, exclaimed, "No, no,—I am not mad,—I am going to Nice—to my huſband."

"She's quite crazy," ſaid the man of the houſe, who was a pawn-broker; "we had better get rid of her before ſhe grows miſchievous."

"She's ſomebody broke out from a private mad-houſe, I dare ſay," ſaid a man who had followed her into the ſhop; "and if you were to take care of her a little while, ten to one but you'll get a reward for it."

"She's a gentlewoman ſure enough," ſaid the miſtreſs of the houſe, "becauſe ſhe's got ſuch good things on."

And then, under pretence of trying to find ſome direction to her upon a letter, or paper, ſhe inſiſted upon ſearching her pockets: here, however, ſhe was diſappointed in her expectations; her purſe was in the cuſtody of Mr. Simkins, but neither her terror nor diſtreſs had ſaved her from the daring dexterity of villany, and her pockets, in the mob, had been rifled of whatever elſe they contained. The woman therefore heſitated ſome time whether to take charge of her or not: but being urged by the man who made the propoſal, and who ſaid they might depend upon ſeeing her ſoon advertiſed, as having eſcaped from her keepers, they ventured to undertake her.

Mean while ſhe endeavoured again to get out, calling aloud upon Delvile to reſcue her, but ſo wholly bereft of ſenſe and recollection, ſhe could give no account who ſhe was, whence ſhe came, or whither ſhe wiſhed to go.

They

They then carried her up ſtairs, and attempted to make her lie down upon a bed; but ſuppoſing ſhe refuſed, becauſe it was not of ſtraw, they deſiſted; and, taking away the candle, locked the door, and all went to reſt.

In this miſerable condition, alone and raving, ſhe was left to paſs the night! in the early part of it, ſhe called upon Delvile without intermiſſion, beſeeching him to come to her defence in one moment, and deploring his death the next; but afterwards, her ſtrength being wholly exhauſted by theſe various exertions and fatigues, ſhe threw herſelf upon the floor, and lay for ſome minutes quite ſtill. Her head then began to grow cooler, as the fever into which terror and immoderate exerciſe had thrown her abated, and her memory recovered its functions.

This was, however, only a circumſtance of horror to her: ſhe found herſelf ſhut up in a place of confinement, without light, without knowledge where ſhe was, and not a human being near her!

Yet the ſame returning reaſon which enabled her to take this view of her own ſituation, brought alſo to her mind that in which ſhe had left Delvile;—under all the perturbation of new-kindled jealouſy, juſt calling upon Belfield,—Belfield, tenacious of his honour even more than himſelf,—to ſatisfy doubts, of which the very mention would be received as a challenge!

"Oh,

"Oh, yet, oh, yet," cried ſhe, "let me fly and overtake them!—I may find them before morning, and to-night it muſt ſurely have been too late for this work of death!"

She then aroſe to feel for the door, and ſucceeded; but it was locked, and no effort ſhe could make enabled her to open it.

Her agony was unſpeakable; ſhe called out with violence upon the people of the houſe, conjured them to ſet her at liberty, offered any reward for their aſſiſtance, and threatened them with a proſecution if detained.

Nobody, however, came near her: ſome ſlept on notwithſtanding all the diſturbance ſhe could make, and others, though awakened by her cries, concluded them the ravings of a mad woman, and liſtened not to what ſhe ſaid.

Her head was by no means in a condition to bear this violence of diſtreſs; every pulſe was throbbing, every vein ſeemed burſting, her reaſon ſo lately returned, could not bear the repetition of ſuch a ſhock, and from ſupplicating for help with all the energy of feeling and underſtanding, ſhe ſoon continued the cry from mere vehemence of diſtraction.

Thus dreadfully paſſed the night; and in the morning, when the woman of the houſe came to ſee after her, ſhe found her raving with ſuch frenzy and deſperation, that her conſcience was perfectly at eaſe in the treatment

ment ſhe had given her, being now firmly ſatisfied ſhe required the ſtricteſt confinement.

She ſtill, however, tried to get away; talked of Delvile without ceſſation, ſaid ſhe ſhould be too late to ſerve him; told the woman ſhe deſired but to prevent murder, and repeatedly called out, "Oh, beloved of my heart! wait but a moment, and I will ſnatch thee from deſtruction!"

Mrs. Wyers, this woman, now ſought no longer to draw from her whence ſhe came, or who ſhe was, but heard her frantic exclamations without any emotion, contentedly concluding that her madneſs was incurable: and though ſhe was in a high fever, refuſed all ſuſtenance, and had every ſymptom of an alarming and dangerous malady, ſhe was fully perſuaded that her caſe was that of decided inſanity, and had not any notion of temporary or accidental alienation of reaſon.

All ſhe could think of by way of indulgence to her, was to bring her a quantity of ſtraw, having heard that mad people were fond of it; and putting it in a heap in one corner of the room, ſhe expected to ſee her eagerly fly to it.

Cecilia, however, diſtracted as ſhe was, was eager for nothing, but to eſcape, which was conſtantly her aim, alike when violent, or when quiet. Mrs. Wyers finding this, kept her cloſely confined, and the door always locked, whether abſent or preſent.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

An Encounter.

TWO whole days paſſed thus; no enquiries reached Mrs. Wyers, and ſhe found in the news papers no advertiſement. Meanwhile Cecilia grew worſe every moment, taſted neither drink nor food, raved inceſſantly, called out twenty times in a breath, "Where is he? which way is he gone?" and implored the woman by the moſt pathetic remonſtrances, to ſave her unhappy Delvile, *dearer to her than life, more precious than peace or reſt!*

At other times ſhe talked of her marriage, of the diſpleaſure of his family, and of her own remorſe; entreated the woman not to betray her, and promiſed to ſpend the remnant of her days in the heavineſs of ſorrow and contrition.

Again her fancy roved, and Mr. Monckton took ſole poſſeſſion of it. She reproached him for his perfidy, ſhe bewailed that he was maſſacred, ſhe would not a moment out-live him, and wildly declared *her laſt remains ſhould moulder in his hearſe!* And thus, though naturally and commonly of a ſilent and quiet diſpoſition, ſhe was now not a moment ſtill, for the irregular ſtarts of a terrified and diſordered imagination, were changed into the conſtant ravings of morbid delirium.

The

The woman, growing uneaſy from her uncertainty of pay for her trouble, aſked the advice of ſome of her friends what was proper for her to do; and they counſelled her to put an advertiſement into the papers herſelf the next morning.

The following, therefore, was drawn up and ſent to the printer of the Daily Advertiſer.

MADNESS.

Whereas a crazy young lady, tall, fair complexioned, with blue eyes and light hair, ran into the Three Blue Balls, in —— ſtreet, on Thurſday night, the 2d inſtant, and has been kept there ſince out of charity. She was dreſſed in a riding-habit. Whoever ſhe belongs to is deſired to ſend after her immediately. She has been treated with the utmoſt care and tenderneſs. She talks much of ſome perſon by the name of Delvile.

N. B. She had no money about her.

May 1780.

This had but juſt been ſent off, when Mr. Wyers, the man of the houſe, coming up ſtairs, ſaid, "Now we ſhall have two of them, for here's the crazy old gentleman below, that ſays he has juſt heard in the neighbourhood of what has happened to us, and he deſires to ſee the poor lady."

"It's

"It's as well let him come up, then," anſwered Mrs. Wyers, "for he goes to all ſorts of places and people, and ten to one but he'll buſtle about till he finds out who ſhe is."

Mr. Wyers then went down ſtairs to ſend him up.

He came inſtantly. It was Albany, who in his vagrant rambles having heard an unknown mad lady was at this pawn-broker's, came, with his cuſtomary eagerneſs, to viſit and ſerve the unhappy, to ſee what could be done for her.

When he entered the room, ſhe was ſitting upon the bed, her eyes earneſtly fixed upon the window, from which ſhe was privately indulging a wiſh to make her eſcape. Her dreſs was in much diſorder, her fine hair was diſhevelled, and the feathers of her riding-hat were broken and half falling down, ſome ſhading her face, others reaching to her ſhoulder.

"Poor lady!" cried Albany, approaching her, "how long has ſhe been in this ſtate?"

She ſtarted at the ſound of a new voice, ſhe looked round—but what was the aſtoniſhment of Albany to ſee who it was! He ſtept back—he came forward—he doubted his own ſenſes,—he looked at her earneſtly—he turned from her to look at the woman of the houſe,—he caſt his eyes round the room itſelf, and then, lifting up his hands, "O, ſight of woe!" he cried, "the generous and good! the

the kind reliever of diſtreſs! the benign ſuſtainer of miſery!—is *This* Cecilia!"—

Cecilia, imperfectly recollecting, though not underſtanding him, ſunk down at his feet, tremblingly called out, "Oh, if he is yet to be ſaved, if already he is not murdered,—go to him! fly after him! you will preſently overtake him, he is only in the next ſtreet, I left him there myſelf, his ſword drawn, and covered with human blood!"

"Sweet powers of kindneſs and compaſſion!" cried the old man, "look upon this creature with pity! ſhe who raiſed the depreſſed, ſhe who cheared the unhappy! ſhe whoſe liberal hand turned lamentations into joy! who never with a tearleſs eye could hear the voice of ſorrow!—is *This* ſhe herſelf!—can *This* be Cecilia!"

"O do not wait to talk!" cried ſhe, "go to him now, or you will never ſee him more; the hand of death is on him,—cold, clay-cold is its touch! he is breathing his laſt—Oh, murdered Delvile! maſſacred huſband of my heart! groan not ſo piteouſly! fly to him, and pluck the poinard from his wounded boſom!"

"Oh, ſounds of anguiſh and horror!" cried the melted moraliſt, tears running quick down his rugged cheeks; "melancholy indeed is this ſight; humiliating to mortality! ſuch is human ſtrength, ſuch human felicity!——weak as our virtues, frail as our guilty natures!"

"Ah,"

"Ah," cried ſhe, more wildly, "no one will ſave me now! I am married, and no one will liſten to me! ill were the auſpices under which I gave my hand! Oh, it was a work of darkneſs, unacceptable and offenſive! it has been ſealed, therefore, with blood, and to-morrow it will be ſigned with murder!"

"Poor diſtracted creature!" exclaimed he, "thy pangs I have felt, but thy innocence I have forfeited!—my own wounds bleed afreſh,——my own brain threatens new frenzy."——

Then, ſtarting up, "Good woman," he added, "kindly attend her,—I will ſeek out her friends, put her into bed, comfort, ſoothe, compoſe her.——I will come to you again, and as ſoon as I can."

He then hurried away.

"Oh, hour of joy!" cried Cecilia, "he is gone to reſcue him! oh, bliſsful moment! he will yet be ſnatched from ſlaughter!"

The woman loſt not an inſtant in obeying the orders ſhe had received; ſhe was put into bed, and nothing was neglected, as far as ſhe had power and thought, to give a look of decency and attention to her accommodations.

He had not left them an hour, when Mary, the maid, who had attended her from Suffolk, came to enquire for her lady. Albany, who was now wandering over the town in ſearch of ſome of her friends, and who entered every houſe where he imagined ſhe was known, had

had haſtened to that of Mrs. Hill the firſt of any, as he was well acquainted with her obligations to Cecilia; there, Mary herſelf, by the directions which her lady had given Mrs. Belfield, had gone; and there, in the utmoſt aſtoniſhment and uneaſineſs, had continued till Albany brought news of her.

She was ſurpriſed and afflicted beyond meaſure, not only at the ſtate of her mind, and her health, but to find her in a bed and an apartment ſo unſuitable to her rank of life, and ſo different to what ſhe had ever been accuſtomed. She wept bitterly while ſhe enquired at the bed-ſide how her lady did, but wept ſtill more, when, without anſwering, or ſeeming to know her, Cecilia ſtarted up, and called out, "I muſt be removed this moment! I muſt go to St. James's-Square,—if I ſtay an inſtant longer, the paſſing-bell will toll, and then how ſhall I be in time for the funeral?"

Mary, alarmed and amazed, turned haſtily from her to the woman of the houſe, who calmly ſaid, the lady was only in a raving fit, and muſt not be minded.

Extremely frightened at this intelligence, ſhe entreated her to be quiet and lie ſtill. But Cecilia grew ſuddenly ſo violent, that force only could keep her from riſing; and Mary, unuſed to diſpute her commands, prepared to obey them.

Mrs. Wyers now in her turn oppoſed in vain; Cecilia was peremptory, and Mary became

came implicit, and, though not without much difficulty, ſhe was again dreſſed in her riding-habit. This operation over, ſhe moved towards the door, the temporary ſtrength of delirium giving her a hardineſs that combated fever, illneſs, fatigue, and feebleneſs. Mary, however averſe and fearful, aſſiſted her, and Mrs. Wyers, compelled by the obedience of her own ſervant, went before them to order a chair.

Cecilia, however, felt her weakneſs when ſhe attempted to move down ſtairs; her feet tottered, and her head became dizzy; ſhe leaned it againſt Mary, who called aloud for more help, and made her ſit down till it came. Her reſolution, however, was not to be altered; a ſtubbornneſs, wholly foreign to her genuine character, now made her ſtern and poſitive; and Mary, who thought her ſubmiſſion indiſpenſable, cried, but did not offer to oppoſe her.

Mr. and Mrs. Wyers both came up to aſſiſt in ſupporting her, and Mr. Wyers offered to carry her in his arms; but ſhe would not conſent; when ſhe came to the bottom of the ſtairs, her head grew worſe, ſhe again leant it upon Mary, but Mr. Wyers was obliged to hold them both. She ſtill, however, was firm in her determination, and was making another effort to proceed, when Delvile ruſhed haſtily into the ſhop.

He

He had juſt encountered Albany; who, knowing his acquaintance, though ignorant of his marriage with Cecilia, had informed him where to ſeek her.

He was going to make enquiry if he was come to the right houſe, when he perceived her, —— feeble, ſhaking, leaning upon one perſon, and half carried by another! —— he ſtarted back, ſtaggered, gaſped for breath, —— but finding they were proceeding, advanced with trepidation, furiouſly calling out, "Hold! ſtop!——what is it you are doing? Monſters of ſavage barbarity, are you murdering my wife?"

The well-known voice no ſooner ſtruck the ears of Cecilia, than inſtantly recollecting it, ſhe ſcreamed, and, in ſuddenly endeavouring to ſpring forward, fell to the ground.

Delvile had vehemently advanced to catch her in his arms and ſave her fall, which her unexpected quickneſs had prevented her attendants from doing; but the ſight of her changed complexion, and the wildneſs of her eyes and air, again made him ſtart, —— his blood froze through his veins, and he ſtood looking at her, cold and almoſt petrified.

Her own recollection of him ſeemed loſt already; and exhauſted by the fatigue ſhe had gone through in dreſſing and coming down ſtairs, ſhe remained ſtill and quiet, forgetting her deſign of proceeding, and forming no new one for returning.

Mary,

Mary, to whom, as to all her fellow-ſervants, the marriage of Cecilia had been known, before ſhe left the country, now deſired from Delvile directions what was to be done.

Delvile, ſtarting ſuddenly at this call from the deepeſt horror into the moſt deſperate rage, fiercely exclaimed, "Inhuman wretches! unfeeling, execrable wretches, what is it you have done to her? how came ſhe hither? — who brought her? who dragged her? — by what infamous uſage has ſhe been ſunk into this ſtate?"

"Indeed, Sir, I don't know!" cried Mary.

"I aſſure you, Sir," ſaid Mrs. Wyers, "the lady ——— "

"Peace!" cried he, furiouſly, "I will not hear your falſhoods!—peace, and begone!"—

Then caſting himſelf upon the ground by her ſide, "Oh, my Cecilia," he cried, "where haſt thou been thus long? how have I loſt thee? what dreadful calamity has befallen thee?—anſwer me, my love! raiſe your ſweet head and anſwer me!——oh ſpeak! —— ſay to me any thing; the bittereſt words will be mercy to this ſilence?" ——

Cecilia then, ſuddenly looking up, called out with great quickneſs, "Who are you?"

"Who am I!" cried he, amazed and affrighted.

"I ſhould be glad you would go away," cried ſhe, in a hurrying manner, "for you are quite unknown to me."

Delvile,

Delvile, unconſcious of her inſanity, and attributing to reſentment this averſion and repulſe, haſtily moved from her, mournfully anſwering, "Well indeed may you diſclaim me, refuſe all forgiveneſs, load me with hatred and reproach, and conſign me to eternal anguiſh! I have merited ſeverer puniſhment ſtill; I have behaved like a monſter, and I am abhorrent to myſelf!"

Cecilia now half riſing, and regarding him with mingled terror and anger, eagerly exclaimed, "If you do not mean to mangle and deſtroy me, begone this inſtant."

"To mangle you!" repeated Delvile, ſhuddering, "how horrible!—but I deſerve it all!—look not, however, ſo terrified, and I will tear myſelf away from you. Suffer me but to aſſiſt in removing you from this place, and I will only watch you at a diſtance, and never ſee you more till you permit me to approach you.

"Why, why," cried Cecilia, with a look of perplexity and impatience, "will you not tell me your name, and where you come from?"

"Do you not know me?" ſaid he, ſtruck with new horror; "or do you only mean to kill me by the queſtion?"

"Do you bring me any meſſage from Mr. Monckton?"

"From Mr. Monckton?—no; but he lives, and will recover."

"I thought you had been Mr. Monckton yourſelf."

"Too cruel, yet juſtly cruel Cecilia!—is then Delvile utterly renounced?—the guilty, the unhappy Delvile!—is he caſt off for ever? have you driven him wholly from your heart? do you deny him even a place in your remembrance?"

"Is your name, then, Delvile?"

"Oh, what is it you mean! is it me or my name you thus diſown?"

"'Tis a name," cried ſhe, ſitting up, "I well remember to have heard, and once I loved it, and three times I called upon it in the dead of night. And when I was cold and wretched, I cheriſhed it; and when I was abandoned and left alone, I repeated it and ſung to it."

"All gracious powers!" cried Delvile, "her reaſon is utterly gone!" And, haſtily riſing, he deſperately added, "what is death to this blow?—Cecilia, I am content to part with thee!"

Mary now, and Mrs. Wyers, poured upon him eagerly an account of her illneſs, and inſanity, her deſire of removal, and their inability to control her.

Delvile, however, made no anſwer; he ſcarce heard them: the deepeſt deſpair took poſſeſſion of his mind, and, rooted to the ſpot where he ſtood, he contemplated in dreadful ſtillneſs the fallen and altered object of his beſt

beſt hopes and affections; already in her faded cheeks and weakened frame, his agonizing terror read the quick impending deſtruction of all his earthly happineſs! the ſight was too much for his fortitude, and almoſt for his underſtanding; and when his woe became utterable, he wrung his hands, and groaning aloud, called out "Art thou gone ſo ſoon! my wife! my Cecilia! have I loſt thee already?"

Cecilia, with utter inſenſibility to what was paſſing, now ſuddenly, and with a rapid, yet continued motion, turned her head from ſide to ſide, her eyes wildly glaring, yet apparently regarding nothing.

"Dreadful! dreadful!" exclaimed Delvile, "what a ſight is this!" and turning from her to the people of the houſe, he angrily ſaid, "why is ſhe here upon the floor? could you not even allow her a bed? Who attends her? Who waits upon her? Why has nobody ſent for help?—Don't anſwer me,—I will not hear you: fly this moment for a phyſician,—bring two, bring three—bring all you can find!"

Then, ſtill looking from Cecilia, whoſe ſight he could no longer ſupport, he conſulted with Mary whither ſhe ſhould be conveyed: and, as the night was far advanced, and no place was prepared for her elſewhere, they ſoon agreed that ſhe could only be removed up ſtairs.

Delvile now attempted to carry her in his arms; but trembling and unſteady, he had not ſtrength to ſuſtain her; yet not enduring to behold the helpleſſneſs he could not aſſiſt, he conjured them to be careful and gentle, and, committing her to their truſt, ran out himſelf for a phyſician.

Cecilia reſiſted them with her utmoſt power, imploring them not to bury her alive, and averring ſhe had received intelligence they meant to entomb her with Mr. Monckton.

They put her, however, to bed, but her raving grew ſtill more wild and inceſſant.

Delvile ſoon returned with a phyſician, but had not courage to attend him to her room. He waited for him at the foot of the ſtairs, where, haſtily ſtopping him, "Well, Sir," he cried, "is it not all over? is it not impoſſible ſhe can live?"

"She is very ill, indeed, Sir," he anſwered, "but I have given directions which perhaps ——"

"*Perhaps!*" interrupted Delvile, ſhuddering; "do not ſtab me with ſuch a word!"

"She is very delirious," he continued, "but as her fever is very high, that is not ſo material. If the orders I have given take effect, and the fever is got under, all the reſt will be well of courſe."

He then went away; leaving Delvile as much thunderſtruck by anſwers ſo alarming, as

as if he had conſulted him in full hope, and without even ſuſpicion of her danger.

The moment he recovered from this ſhock, he flew out of the houſe for more advice.

He returned and brought with him two phyſicians.

They confirmed the directions already given, but would pronounce nothing deciſively of her ſituation.

Delvile, half mad with the acuteneſs of his miſery, charged them all with want of ſkill, and wrote inſtantly into the country for Dr. Lyſter.

He went out himſelf in ſearch of a meſſenger to ride off expreſs, though it was midnight, with his letter; and then, returning, he was haſtening to her room, but, while yet at the door, hearing her ſtill raving, his horror conquered his eagerneſs, and, hurrying down ſtairs, he ſpent the remnant of the long and ſeemingly endleſs night in the ſhop.

CHAP. IX.

A TRIBUTE.

MEANWHILE Cecilia went through very ſevere diſcipline, ſometimes ſtrongly oppoſing it, at other times ſcarce ſenſible what was done to her.

The whole of the next day paſſed in much the ſame manner, neither did the next night bring any viſible alteration. She had now nurſes and attendants even more than ſufficient, for Delvile had no relief but from calling in more help. His terror of again ſeeing her, encreaſed with his forbearance; the interview which had already paſt had almoſt torn him aſunder, and loſing all courage for attempting to enter her room, he now ſpent almoſt all his time upon the ſtairs which led to it. Whenever ſhe was ſtill, he ſeated himſelf at her chamber-door, where, if he could hear her breathe or move, a ſudden hope of her recovery gave to him a momentary extaſy that recompenſed all his ſufferings. But the inſtant ſhe ſpoke, unable to bear the ſound of ſo lovely a voice uttering nothing but the incoherent ravings of lightheadedneſs, he haſtened down ſtairs, and flying out of the houſe, walked in the neighbouring ſtreets, till he could again gather courage to enquire or to liſten how ſhe went on.

The following morning, however, Dr. Lyſter came, and every hope revived. He flew to embrace him, told him inſtantly his marriage with Cecilia, and beſought him by ſome ſuperior effort of his extraordinary abilities to ſave him the diſtraction of her loſs.

"My good friend," cried the worthy Dr. "what is this you aſk of me? and how can this poor young lady herſelf want advice more than

than you do? Do you think theſe able phyſicians actually upon the ſpot, with all the experience of full practice in London to aſſiſt their ſkill, want a petty Doctor out of the country to come and teach them what is right?"

"I have more reliance upon you," cried Delvile, "than upon the whole faculty; come, therefore, and preſcribe for her, — take ſome new courſe."—

"Impoſſible, my good Sir, impoſſible! I muſt not loſe my wits from vanity, becauſe you have loſt yours from affliction. I could not refuſe to come to you when you wrote to me with ſuch urgency, and I will now go and ſee the young lady, as a *friend*, with all my heart. I am ſorry for you at my ſoul, Mr. Mortimer! She is a lovely young creature, and has an underſtanding, for her years and ſex, unequalled."

"Never mention her to me!" cried the impatient Delvile, "I cannot bear it! Go up to her, dear Doctor, and if you want a conſultation, ſend, if you pleaſe, for every phyſician in town."

Dr. Lyſter deſired only that thoſe who already attended might be ſummoned; and then, giving up to his entreaties the accuſtomed ceremonial of waiting for them, he went to Cecilia.

Delvile did not dare to accompany him; and ſo well was he acquainted with his plainneſs

and ſincerity, that though he expected his return with eagerneſs, he no ſooner heard him upon the ſtairs, than fearing to know his opinion, he haſtily ſnatched up his hat, and ruſhed vehemently out of the houſe to avoid him.

He continued to walk about the ſtreets, till even the dread of ill news was leſs horrible to him than this voluntary ſuſpenſe, and then he returned to the houſe.

He found Dr. Lyſter in a ſmall back parlour, which Mrs. Wyers, finding ſhe ſhould now be well paid, had appropriated for Delvile's uſe.

Delvile, putting his hand upon the Doctor's ſhoulder, ſaid, "Well, my dear Doctor Lyſter, *you*, ſtill, I hope."—

"I would I could make you eaſy!" interrupted the Doctor; "yet, if you are rational, one comfort, at all events, I can give you; the criſis ſeems approaching, and either ſhe will recover, or before to-morrow morning."—

"Don't go on, Sir!" cried Delvile, with mingled rage and horror, "I will not have her days limited! I ſent not for you to give me ſuch an account!"

And again he flew out of the houſe, leaving Dr. Lyſter unaffectedly concerned for him, and too kind-hearted and too wiſe to be offended at the injuſtice of immoderate ſorrow.

In a few minutes, however, from the effect rather of deſpair than philoſophy, Delvile grew more compoſed, and waited upon Dr. Lyſter

Lyſter to apologize for his behaviour. He received his hearty forgiveneſs, and prevailed upon him to continue in town till the whole was decided.

About noon, Cecilia, from the wildeſt rambling and moſt perpetual agitation, ſunk ſuddently into a ſtate of ſuch utter inſenſibility, that ſhe appeared unconſcious even of her exiſtence; and but that ſhe breathed, ſhe might already have paſſed for being dead.

When Delvile heard this he could no longer endure even his poſt upon the ſtairs; he ſpent his whole time in wandering about the ſtreets, or ſtopping in Dr. Lyſter's parlour to enquire if all was over.

That humane phyſician, not more alarmed at the danger of Cecilia, than grieved at the ſituation of Delvile, thought the preſent fearful criſis at leaſt offered an opportunity of reconciling him with his father. He waited, therefore, upon that gentleman in St. James's-Square, and openly informed him of the dangerous ſtate of Cecilia, and the miſery of his ſon.

Mr. Delvile, though he would gladly, to have annulled an alliance he held diſgraceful to his family, have received intelligence that Cecilia was no more, was yet extremely diſconcerted to hear of ſufferings to which his own refuſal of an aſylum he was conſcious had largely contributed; and after a haughty ſtruggle between tenderneſs and wrath, he

begged the advice of Dr. Lyſter how his ſon might be drawn from ſuch a ſcene.

Dr. Lyſter, who well knew Delvile was too deſperate to be tractable, propoſed ſurpriſing him into an interview by their returning together: Mr. Delvile, however apprehenſive and relenting, conceded moſt unwillingly to a meaſure he held beneath him, and, when he came to the ſhop, could ſcarce be perſuaded to enter. Mortimer, at that time, was taking a ſolitary ramble; and Dr. Lyſter, to complete the work he had begun of ſubduing the hard pride of his father, contrived, under pretence of waiting for him, to conduct him to the room of the invalid.

Mr. Delvile, who knew not whither he was going, at firſt ſight of the bed and the attendants, was haſtily retreating; but the changed and livid face of Cecilia caught his eye, and, ſtruck with ſudden conſternation, he involuntarily ſtopt.

"Look at the poor young lady!" cried Dr. Lyſter; "can you wonder a ſight ſuch as this ſhould make Mr. Mortimer forget every thing elſe?"

She was wholly inſenſible, but perfectly quiet; ſhe ſeemed to diſtinguiſh nothing, and neither ſpoke nor moved.

Mr. Delvile regarded her with the utmoſt horror: the refuge he ſo implacably refuſed her on the night when her intellects were diſordered, he would now gladly have offered at

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the expence of almoſt ſimilar ſufferings, to have relieved himſelf from thoſe riſing pangs which called him author of this ſcene of woe. His pride, his pomp, his ancient name, were now ſunk in his eſtimation; and while he conſidered himſelf the deſtroyer of this unhappy young creature, he would have ſacrificed them all to have called himſelf her protector. Little is the boaſt of inſolence when it is analyſed by the conſcience! bitter is the agony of ſelf-reproach, where miſery follows hardneſs of heart! yet, when the firſt painful aſtoniſhment from her ſituation abated, the remorſe ſhe excited being far ſtronger than the pity, he gave an angry glance at Dr. Lyſter for betraying him into ſuch a ſight, and haſtily left the room.

Delvile, who now impatiently waiting to ſee Dr. Lyſter in the little parlour, alarmed at the ſound of a new ſtep upon the ſtairs, came out to enquire who had been admitted. When he ſaw his father, he ſhrunk back; but Mr. Delvile, no longer ſupported by pride, and unable to recover from the ſhock he had juſt received, caught him in his arms, and ſaid, "Oh, come home to me, my ſon! this is a place to deſtroy you!"

"Ah, Sir," cried Delvile, "think not of me now—you muſt ſhew me no kindneſs; I am not in a ſtate to bear it!" And, forcibly breaking from him, he hurried out of the houſe.

Mr. Delvile, all the father awakened in his boſom, ſaw his departure with more dread than anger; and returned himſelf to St. James's-Square, tortured with parental fears, and ſtung by perſonal remorſe, lamenting his own inflexibility, and purſued by the pale image of Cecilia.

She was ſtill in this unconſcious ſtate, and apparently as free from ſuffering as from enjoyment, when a new voice was ſuddenly heard without, exclaiming, "Oh, where is ſhe? where is ſhe? where is my dear Miſs Beverley?" and Henrietta Belfield ran wildly into the room.

The advertiſement in the news-papers had at once brought her to town, and directed her to the houſe: the mention that the loſt lady *talked much of a perſon by the name of Delvile*, ſtruck her inſtantly to mean Cecilia; the deſcription correſponded with this idea, and the account of the dreſs confirmed it: Mr. Arnott, equally terrified with herſelf, had therefore lent her his chaiſe to learn the truth of this conjecture, and ſhe had travelled all night.

Flying up to the bedſide, "Who is this?" ſhe cried, "this is not Miſs Beverley?" and then ſcreaming with unreſtrained horror, "Oh mercy! mercy!" ſhe called out, "yes it is indeed! and nobody would know her!—her own mother would not think her her child!"

"You

"You muſt come away, Miſs Belfield," ſaid Mary, "you muſt indeed,—the doctors all ſay my lady muſt not be diſturbed."

"Who ſhall take me away?" cried ſhe, angrily, "nobody, Mary! not all the doctors in the world! Oh, ſweet Miſs Beverley! I will lie down by your ſide,—I will never quit you while you live,—and I wiſh, I wiſh I could die to ſave your precious life!"

Then, leaning over her, and wringing her hands, "Oh, I ſhall break my heart," ſhe cried, "to ſee her in this condition! Is this the ſo happy Miſs Beverley, that I thought every body born to give joy to? the Miſs Beverley that ſeemed queen of the whole world! yet ſo good and ſo gentle, ſo kind to the meaneſt perſon! excuſing every body's faults but her own, and telling them how they might mend, and trying to make them as good as herſelf!—Oh, who would know her! what have they done to you, my beloved Miſs Beverley? how have they altered and diſfigured you in this wicked and barbarous manner?"

In the midſt of this ſimple yet pathetic teſtimony, to the worth and various excellencies of Cecilia, Dr. Lyſter came into the room. The women all flocked around him, except Mary, to vindicate themſelves from any ſhare in permitting this new comer's entrance and behaviour; but Mary only told him who ſhe was, and ſaid, that if her lady was well enough to know her, there was nobody, ſhe

was

was certain, ſhe would have been ſo glad to ſee.

"Young lady," ſaid the doctor, "I would adviſe you to walk into another room till you are a little more compoſed."

"Every body, I find, is for hurrying me away;" cried the ſobbing Henrietta, whoſe honeſt heart ſwelled with it's own affectionate integrity; "but they might all ſave themſelves the trouble, for go I will not!"

"This is very wrong," ſaid the Doctor, "and muſt not be ſuffered: do you call it friendſhip to come about a ſick perſon in this manner?"

"Oh, my Miſs Beverley," cried Henrietta, "do you hear how they all upbraided me? how they all want to force me away from you, and to hinder me even from looking at you! Speak for me, ſweet lady! ſpeak for me yourſelf! tell them the poor Henrietta will not do you any harm; tell them ſhe only wiſhes juſt to ſit by you, and to ſee you!——I will hold by this dear hand,—I will cling to it till the laſt minute; and you will not, I know you will not, give orders to have it taken away from me!"

Dr. Lyſter, though his own good-nature was much affected by this fond ſorrow, now half angrily repreſented to her the impropriety of indulging it: but Henrietta, unuſed to diſguiſe or repreſs her feelings, grew only the more violent, the more ſhe was convinced of Cecilia's danger: "Oh, look but at her," ſhe exclaimed,

exclaimed, "and take me from her if you can? ſee how her ſweet eyes are fixed! look but what a change in her complexion!—She does not ſee me, ſhe does not know me,—ſhe does not hear me! her hand ſeems quite lifeleſs already, her face is all fallen away!—Oh, that I had died twenty deaths before I had lived to ſee this ſight;—poor wretched Henrietta, thou haſt now no friend left in the world! thou mayſt go and lie down in ſome corner, and no one will come and ſay to thee a word of comfort!"

"This muſt not be!" ſaid Dr. Lyſter, "you muſt take her away."

"You ſhall not!" cried ſhe, deſperately, "I will ſtay with her till ſhe has breathed her laſt, and I will ſtay with her ſtill longer! and if ſhe was to ſpeak to you at this moment, ſhe would tell you that ſhe choſe it. She loved the poor Henrietta; and loved to have her near her; and when ſhe was ill, and in much diſtreſs, ſhe never once bid me leave her room. Is it not true, my ſweet Miſs Beverley? do you not know it to be true? Oh, look not ſo dreadfully! turn to your unhappy Henrietta; ſweeteſt, beſt of ladies! will you not ſpeak to her once more? will you not ſay to her one ſingle word?"

Dr. Lyſter now grew very angry, and telling her ſuch violence might have fatal conſequences, frightened her into more order, and drew her away himſelf. He had then the kindneſs to go with her into another room, where,

when

when her firſt vehemence was ſpent, his remonſtrances and reaſoning brought her to a ſenſe of the danger ſhe might occaſion, and made her promiſe not to return to the room till ſhe had gained ſtrength to behave better.

When Dr. Lyſter went again to Delvile, he found him greatly alarmed by his long ſtay; he communicated to him briefly what had paſſed, and counſelled him to avoid encreaſing his own grief by the ſight of what was ſuffered by this unguarded and ardent girl. Delvile readily aſſented, for the weight of his own woe was too heavy to bear any addition.

Henrietta now, kept in order by Dr. Lyſter, contented herſelf with only ſitting upon the bed, without attempting to ſpeak, and with no other employment than alternately looking at her ſick friend, and covering her ſtreaming eyes with her handkerchief; from time to time quitting the room wholly, for the relief of ſobbing at liberty and aloud in another.

But, in the evening, while Delvile and Dr. Lyſter were taking one of their melancholy rambles, a new ſcene was acted in the apartment of the ſtill ſenſeleſs Cecilia. Albany ſuddenly made his entrance into it, accompanied by three children, two girls and one boy, from the ages of four to ſix, neatly dreſſed, clean, and healthy.

"See here!" cried he, as he came in, "ſee here what I have brought you! raiſe, raiſe your languid head, and look this way! you think

think me rigid,—an enemy to pleaſure, auſtere, harſh, and a forbidder of joy: look at this ſight, and ſee the contrary! who ſhall bring you comfort, joy, pleaſure, like this? three innocent children, cloathed and fed by your bounty!"

Henrietta and Mary, who both knew him well, were but little ſurpriſed at any thing he ſaid or did, and the nurſes preſumed not to interfere but by whiſpers.

Cecilia, however, obſerved nothing that paſſed; and Albany, ſomewhat aſtoniſhed, approached nearer to the bed; "Wilt thou not ſpeak!" he cried.

"She can't, Sir," ſaid one of the women; "ſhe has been ſpeechleſs many hours."

The air of triumph with which he had entered the room was now changed into diſappointment and conſternation. For ſome minutes he thoughtfully and ſorrowfully contemplated her, and then, with a deep ſigh, ſaid, "How will the poor rue this day!"

Then, turning to the children, who, awed by this ſcene, were quiet from terror, "Alas!" he ſaid, "ye helpleſs babes, ye know not what you have loſt: preſumptuouſly we came; unheeded we muſt return! I brought you to be ſeen by your benefactreſs, but ſhe is going were ſhe will find many ſuch."

He then led them away; but, ſuddenly coming back, "I may ſee her, perhaps, no more! ſhall I not, then, pray for her? Great and awful is the change ſhe is making; what

are

are human revolutions, how pitiful, how inſignificant, compared with it?—Come, little babies, come; with gifts has ſhe often bleſſed *you*, with wiſhes bleſs *her!* Come, let us kneel round her bed; let us all pray for her together; lift up your innocent hands, and for all of you I will ſpeak."

He then made the children obey his injunctions, and having knelt himſelf, while Henrietta and Mary inſtantly did the ſame, "Sweet flower!" he cried, "untimely cropt in years, yet in excellence mature! early decayed in miſery, yet fragrant in innocence! Gentle be thy exit, for unſullied have been thy days; brief be thy pains, for few have been thy offences! Look at her, ſweet babes, and bear her in your remembrance; often will I viſit you, and revive the ſolemn ſcene. Look at her ye, alſo, who are nearer to your end—Ah! will you bear it like her?"

He pauſed; and the nurſes and Mrs. Wyers, ſtruck by this call, and moved by the general example, crept to the bed, and dropt on their knees, almoſt involuntarily.

"She departs," reſumed Albany, "the envy of the world! while yet no guilt had ſeized her ſoul, and no remorſe had marred her peace. She was the hand-maid of charity, and pity dwelt in her boſom! her mouth was never opened but to give comfort; her footſteps were followed by bleſſings! Oh, happy in purity, be thine the ſong of triumph!—ſoftly ſhalt thou ſink to temporary ſleep,

ſleep,—ſublimely ſhalt thou riſe to life that wakes for ever!"

He then got up, took the children by their little hands, and went away.

CHAP. X.

A TERMINATION.

DR. Lyſter and Delvile met them at the entrance into the houſe. Extremely alarmed leſt Cecilia had received any diſturbance, they both haſtened up ſtairs, but Delvile proceeded only to the door. He ſtopt there and liſtened; but all was ſilent: the prayers of Albany had ſtruck an awe into every one; and Dr. Lyſter ſoon returned to tell him there was no alteration in his patient.

"And he has not diſturbed her?" cried Delvile.

"No, not at all."

"I think, then," ſaid he, advancing, though trembling, "I will yet ſee her once more."

"No, no, Mr. Mortimer," cried the doctor, "why ſhould you give yourſelf ſo unneceſſary a ſhock?".

"The

"The ſhock," anſwered he, "is over!—tell me, however, is there any chance I may hurt *her?*"

"I believe not; I do not think, juſt now, ſhe will perceive you."

"Well, then,—I may grieve, perhaps, hereafter, that once more—that one glance!" —He ſtopt, irreſolute: the Doctor would again have diſſuaded him, but, after a little heſitation, he aſſured him he was prepared for the worſt, and forced himſelf into the room.

When again, however, he beheld Cecilia,—ſenſeleſs, ſpeechleſs, motionleſs, her features void of all expreſſion, her cheeks without colour, her eyes without meaning,--he ſhrunk from the ſight, he leant upon Dr. Lyſter, and almoſt groaned aloud.

The Doctor would have conducted him out of the apartment; but, recovering from this firſt agony, he turned again to view her, and caſting up his eyes, fervently ejaculated, "Oh, merciful powers! Take, or deſtroy her! let her not linger thus, rather let me loſe her for ever!--Oh, rather would I ſee her dead, than in this dreadful condition!"

Then, advancing to the bedſide, and yet more earneſtly looking at her, "I pray not now," he cried, "for thy life! inhumanly as I have treated thee, I am not yet ſo hardened as to wiſh thy miſery lengthened: no, quick be thy reſtoration, or ſhort as pure thy paſ-

ſage

ſage to eternity!—Oh, my Cecilia! lovely, however altered! ſweet even in the arms of death and inſanity! and dearer to my tortured heart in this calamitous ſtate, than in all thy pride of health and beauty!—"

He ſtopt, and turned from her, yet could not tear himſelf away; he came back, he again looked at her, he hung over her in anguiſh unutterable; he kiſſed each burning hand, he folded to his boſom her feeble form, and recovering his ſpeech, though almoſt burſting with ſorrow, faintly articulated, "Is all over? no ray of reaſon left? no knowledge of thy wretched Delvile?—no, none!—— the hand of death is on her, and ſhe is utterly, gone!—ſweet, ſuffering excellence! lovely, loſt, expiring Cecilia!——but I will not repine! peace and kindred angels are watching to receive thee, and if thou art parted from thyſelf, it were impious to lament thou ſhouldſt be parted from me.--Yet in thy tomb will be depoſited all that to me could render exiſtence ſupportable, every frail chance of happineſs, every ſuſtaining hope, and all alleviation of ſorrow!"

Dr. Lyſter now again approaching, thought he perceived ſome change in his patient, and peremptorily forced him away from her: then returning himſelf, he found that her eyes were ſhut, and ſhe was dropt aſleep.

This was an omen the moſt favourable he could hope. He now ſeated himſelf by the bedſide,

bedſide, and determined not to quit her till the expected criſis was paſt. He gave the ſtricteſt orders for the whole houſe to be kept quiet, and ſuffered no one in the room either to ſpeak or move.

Her ſleep was long and heavy; yet, when ſhe awoke, her ſenſibility was evidently returned. She ſtarted, ſuddenly raiſed her head from the pillow, looked round her, and called out, "where am I now?"

"Thank Heaven!" cried Henrietta, and was ruſhing forward, when Dr. Lyſter, by a ſtern and angry look, compelled her again to take her ſeat.

He then ſpoke to her himſelf, enquired how ſhe did, and found her quite rational.

Henrietta, who now doubted not her perfect recovery, wept as violently for joy as ſhe had before wept for grief; and Mary, in the ſame belief, ran inſtantly to Delvile, eager to carry to him the firſt tidings that her miſtreſs had recovered her reaſon.

Delvile, in the utmoſt emotion, then returned to the chamber; but ſtood at ſome diſtance from the bed, waiting Dr. Lyſter's permiſſion to approach it.

Cecilia was quiet and compoſed, her recollection ſeemed reſtored, and her intellects ſound: but ſhe was faint and weak, and contentedly ſilent, to avoid the effort of ſpeaking.

Dr.

Dr. Lyſter encouraged this ſtillneſs, and ſuffered not any one, not even Delvile, to advance to her. After a ſhort time, however, ſhe again, and very calmly, began to talk to him. She now firſt knew him, and ſeemed much ſurpriſed by his attendance. She could not tell, ſhe ſaid, what of late had happened to her, nor could gueſs where ſhe was, or by what means ſhe came into ſuch a place. Dr. Lyſter deſired her at preſent not to think upon the ſubject, and promiſed her a full account of every thing, when ſhe was ſtronger and more fit for converſing.

This for a while ſilenced her. But, after a ſhort pauſe, "Tell me," ſhe ſaid, "Dr. Lyſter, have I no friend in this place but you?" "Yes, yes, you have ſeveral friends here," anſwered the Doctor, "only I keep them in order, leſt they ſhould hurry or diſturb you."

She ſeemed much pleaſed by this ſpeech; but ſoon after ſaid, "You muſt not, Doctor, keep them in order much longer, for the ſight of them, I think, would much revive me."

"Ah, Miſs Beverley!" cried Henrietta, who could not now reſtrain herſelf, "may not *I*, among the reſt, come and ſpeak to you?"

"Who

"Who is that?" ſaid Cecilia, in a voice of pleaſure, though very feeble; "is it my ever-dear Henrietta?"

"Oh this is joy, indeed!" cried ſhe, fervently kiſſing her cheeks and forehead, "joy that I never, never expected to have more!"

"Come, come," cried Doctor Lyſter, "here's enough of this; did I not do well to keep ſuch people off?"

"I believe you did," ſaid Cecilia, faintly ſmiling; "my too kind Henrietta, you muſt be more tranquil!"

"I will, I will, indeed, madam!—my dear, dear Miſs Beverley, I will, indeed!—now once have you owned me, and once again I hear your ſweet voice, I will do any thing, and every thing, for I am made happy for my whole life!"

"Ah, ſweet Henrietta!" cried Cecilia, giving her her hand, "you muſt ſuppreſs theſe feelings, or our Doctor here will ſoon part us. But tell me, Doctor is there no one elſe that you can let me ſee?"

Delvile, who had liſtened to this ſcene in the unſpeakable perturbation of that hope which is kindled from the very aſhes of deſpair, was now ſpringing forward; but Dr. Lyſter, fearful of the conſequences, haſtily aroſe, and with a look and air not to be diſputed, took hold of his arm, and led him out of the room. He then repreſented to him

him ſtrongly the danger of agitating, or diſturbing her, and charged him to keep from her ſight till better able to bear it; aſſuring him at the ſame time that he might now reaſonably hope her recovery.

Delvile, loſt in tranſport, could make no anſwer, but flew into his arms, and almoſt madly embraced him; he then haſtened out of ſight to pour forth fervent thanks, and hurrying back with equal ſpeed, again embraced the Doctor, and while his manly cheeks were burnt with tears of joy, he could not yet articulate the glad tumult of his ſoul.

The worthy Dr. Lyſter, who heartily partook of his happineſs, again urged him to be diſcreet; and Delvile, no longer intractable and deſperate, gratefully concurred in whatever he commanded. Dr. Lyſter then returned to Cecilia, and to relieve her mind from any uneaſy ſuſpenſe, talked to her openly of Delvile, gave her to underſtand he was acquainted with her marriage, and told her he had prohibited their meeting till each was better able to ſupport it.

Cecilia by this delay ſeemed half gratified, and half diſappointed; but the reſt of the phyſicians, who had been ſummoned upon this happy change, now appearing, the orders were yet more ſtrictly enforced for keeping her quiet.

She ſubmitted, therefore, peaceably; and Delvile, whoſe gladdened heart ſtill throbbed with ſpeechleſs rapture, contentedly watched at her chamber door, and obeyed implicitly whatever was ſaid to him.

She now viſibly, and almoſt hourly grew better; and, in a ſhort time, her anxiety to know all that was paſſed, and by what means ſhe became ſo ill, and confined in a houſe of which ſhe had not any knowledge, obliged Dr. Lyſter to make himſelf maſter of theſe particulars, that he might communicate them to her with a calmneſs that Delvile could not attain.

Delvile himſelf, happy to be ſpared the bitter taſk of ſuch a relation, informed him all he knew of the ſtory, and then entreating him to narrate to her alſo the motives of his own ſtrange, and he feared unpardonable conduct, and the ſcenes which had followed their parting.

He came, he ſaid, to England, ignorant of all that had paſt in his abſence, intending merely to wait upon his father, and communicate his marriage, before he gave directions to his lawyer for the ſettlements and preparations which were to precede its farther publication. He meant, alſo, to ſatisfy himſelf of the real ſituation of Mr. Monckton, and then, after an interview with Cecilia, to have returned to his mother, and waited

at Nice till he might publicly claim his wife.

To this purpoſe he had written in his letter, which he meant to have put in the Poſt-office in London himſelf; and he had but juſt alighted from his chaiſe, when he met Ralph, Cecilia's ſervant, in the ſtreet.

Haſtily ſtopping him, he enquired if he had left his place? "No," anſwered Ralph, "I am only come up to town with my lady."

"With your lady!" cried the aſtoniſhed Delvile, "is your lady then in town?"

"Yes, ſir, ſhe is at Mrs. Belfield's."

"At Mrs. Belfield's?—is her daughter returned home?"

"No, Sir, we left her in the country."

He was then going on with a farther account, but, in too much confuſion of mind to hear him, Delvile abruptly wiſhed him good night, and marched on himſelf towards Belfield's.

The pleaſure with which he would have heard that Cecilia was ſo near to him, was totally loſt in his perplexity to account for her journey. Her letters had never hinted at ſuch a purpoſe,—the news reached him only by accident—it was ten o'clock at night,—yet ſhe was at Belfield's—though the ſiſter was away,—though the mother was profeſſedly odious to her!—In an inſtant, all he had formerly heard, all he had formerly

diſregarded, ruſhed ſuddenly upon his memory, and he began to believe he had been deluded, that his father was right, and that Belfield had ſome ſtrange and improper influence over her heart.

The ſuſpicion was death to him; he drove it from him, he concluded the whole was ſome error: his reaſon as powerfully as his tenderneſs vindicated her innocence; and though he arrived at the houſe in much diſorder, he yet arrived with a firm perſuaſion of an honourable explanation.

The door was open,—a chaiſe was at it in waiting,—Mrs. Belfield was liſtening in the paſſage; theſe appearances were ſtrange, and increaſed his agitation. He aſked for her ſoon in a voice ſcarce audible,—ſhe told him he was engaged with a lady, and muſt not be diſturbed.

That fatal anſwer, at a moment ſo big with the moſt horrible ſurmiſes, was deciſive: furiouſly, therefore, he forced himſelf paſt her, and opened the door:—but when he ſaw them together,—the reſt of the family confeſſedly excluded, his rage turned to horror, and he could hardly ſupport himſelf.

"O, Dr. Lyſter!" he continued, "aſk of the ſweet creature if theſe circumſtances offer any extenuation for the fatal jealouſy which ſeized me? never by myſelf while I live will it be forgiven, but ſhe, perhaps, who is all ſoftneſs, all compaſſion, and all peace, may ſome time hence think

think my ſufferings almoſt equal to my offence."

He then proceeded in his narration.

When he had ſo peremptorily ordered her chaiſe to St. James's-Square, he went back to the houſe, and deſired Belfield to walk out with him. He complied, and they were both ſilent till they came to a coffee-houſe, where they aſked for a private room. The whole way they went, his heart, ſecretly ſatisfied of the purity of Cecilia, ſmote him for the ſituation in which he had left her; yet, having unfortunately gone ſo far as to make his ſuſpicions apparent, he thought it neceſſary to his character that their abolition ſhould be equally public.

When they were alone, "Belfield," he ſaid, "to obviate any imputation of impertinence in my enquiries, I deny not, what I preſume you have been told by herſelf, that I have the neareſt intereſt in whatever concerns the lady from whom we are juſt now parted: I muſt beg, therefore, an explicit account of the purpoſe of your private converſation with her."

"Mr. Delvile," anſwered Belfield, with mingled candour and ſpirit, "I am not commonly much diſpoſed to anſwer enquiries thus cavalierly put to me; yet here, as I find myſelf not the principal perſon concerned, I think I am bound in juſtice to ſpeak for the abſent who is. I aſſure you, therefore, moſt ſolemnly, that your intereſt in Miſs Beverley I never heard but by common report, that our being

alone together was by both of us undeſigned and undeſired, that the honour ſhe did our houſe in calling at it, was merely to acquaint my mother with my ſiſter's removal to Mrs. Harrel's, and that the part which I had myſelf in her condeſcenſion, was ſimply to be conſulted upon a journey which ſhe has in contemplation to the South of France. And now, Sir, having given you this peaceable ſatisfaction, you will find me extremely at your ſervice to offer any other."

Delvile inſtantly held out his hand to him; "What you aſſert," he ſaid, "upon your honour, requires no other teſtimony. Your gallantry and your probity are equally well known to me; with either, therefore, I am content, and by no means require the intervention of both."

They then parted; and now, his doubts removed, and his punctilio ſatisfied, he flew to St. James's-Square, to entreat the forgiveneſs of Cecilia for the alarm he had occaſioned her, and to hear the reaſon of her ſudden journey, and change of meaſures. But when he came there, to find that his father, whom he had concluded was at Delvile Caſtle, was in the houſe, while Cecilia had not even enquired for him at the door,—"Oh let me not," he continued, "even to myſelf, let me not trace the agony of that moment!—where to ſeek her I knew not, why ſhe was in London I could not divine, for what purpoſe ſhe had given the poſtillion

tillion a new direction I could form no idea. Yet it appeared that ſhe wiſhed to avoid me, and once more, in the frenzy of my diſappointment, I ſuppoſed Belfield a party in her concealment. Again, therefore, I ſought him —at his own houſe,—at the coffee-houſe where I had left him,—in vain, wherever I came, I juſt miſſed him, for, hearing of my ſearch, he went with equal reſtleſſneſs from place to place to meet me. I rejoice we both failed; a repetition of my enquiries in my then irritable ſtate, muſt inevitably have provoked the moſt fatal reſentment.

"I will not dwell upon the ſcenes that followed—my laborious ſearch, my fruitleſs wanderings, the diſtraction of my ſuſpenſe, the exceſs of my deſpair!—even Belfield, the fiery Belfield, when I met with him the next day, was ſo much touched by my wretchedneſs, that he bore with all my injuſtice; feeling, noble young man! never will I loſe the remembrance of his high-ſouled patience.

And now, Dr. Lyſter, go to my Cecilia; tell her this tale, and try, for you have ſkill ſufficient to ſoften, yet not wound her with my ſufferings. If then ſhe can bear to ſee me, to bleſs me with the ſound of her ſweet voice, no longer at war with her intellects, to hold out to me her loved hand, in token of peace and forgiveneſs.—Oh, Dr. Lyſter! preſerver of *my* life in hers! give to me but that exquiſite mo-

ment, and every paſt evil will be for ever obliterated!"

"You muſt be calmer, Sir," ſaid the Doctor, "before I make the attempt. Theſe heroics are mighty well for ſound health, and ſtrong nerves, but they will not do for an invalid."

He went, however, to Cecilia, and gave her this narration, ſuppreſſing whatever he feared would moſt affect her, and judiciouſly enlivening the whole by his ſtrictures. Cecilia was much eaſier for this removal of her perplexities, and, as her anguiſh and her terror had been unmixed with reſentment, ſhe had now no deſire but to reconcile Delvile with himſelf.

Dr. Lyſter, however, by his friendly authority, obliged her for ſome time to be content with this relation; but when ſhe grew better, her impatience became ſtronger, and he feared oppoſition would be as hurtful as compliance.

Delvile, therefore, was now admitted; yet ſlowly and with trepidation he advanced, terrified for her, and fearful of himſelf, filled with remorſe for the injuries ſhe had ſuſtained, and impreſſed with grief and horror to behold her ſo ill and altered.

Supported by pillows, ſhe ſat almoſt upright. The moment ſhe ſaw him, ſhe attempted to bend forward and welcome him, calling out, in a tone of pleaſure, though faintly, "Ah! deareſt Delvile! is it you?" but too weak for the

the effort ſhe had made, ſhe ſunk back upon her pillow, pale, trembling, and diſordered.

Dr. Lyſter would then have interfered to poſtpone their farther converſation; but Delvile was no longer maſter of himſelf or his paſſions: he darted forward, and kneeling at the bed-ſide, "Sweet injured excellence!" he cried, "wife of my heart! ſole object of my choſen affection! doſt thou yet live? do I hear thy loved voice? — do I ſee thee again? — art thou my Cecilia? and have I indeed not loſt thee?" then regarding her more fixedly, "Alas," he cried, "art thou indeed my Cecilia? ſo pale, ſo emaciated!—Oh, ſuffering angel! and couldſt thou then call upon Delvile, the guilty, but heart broken Delvile, thy deſtroyer, thy murderer, and yet not call to execrate him?"

Cecilia, extremely affected, could not utter a word; ſhe held out to him her hand, ſhe looked at him with gentleneſs and kindneſs, but tears ſtarted into her eyes, and trickled in large drops down her colourleſs cheeks.

"Angelic creature!" cried Delvile, his own tears overflowing, while he preſſed to his lips the kind token of her pardon, "can you give to me again a hand ſo ill deſerved? can you look with ſuch compaſſion on the author of your woes? on the wretch, who for an inſtant could doubt the purity of a mind ſo ſeraphic!"

"Ah, Delvile!" cried ſhe, a little reviving, "think no more of what is paſt!—to ſee you,

—to be yours,—drives all evil from my remembrance!"

"I am not worthy this joy!" cried he, riſing, kneeling, and riſing again: "I know not how to ſuſtain it! a forgiveneſs ſuch as this,—when I believed you muſt hate me for ever! when repulſe and averſion were all I dared expect,—when my own inhumanity had bereft thee of thy reaſon,—when the grave, the pitileſs grave, was already open to receive thee."——

"Too kind, too feeling Delvile!" cried the penetrated Cecilia, "relieve your loaded heart from theſe bitter recollections; mine is lightened already,—lightened, I think, of every thing but its affection for *you!*"

"Oh, words of tranſport and extacy!" cried the enraptured Delvile, "oh, partner of my life! friend, ſolace, darling of my boſom! that ſo lately I thought expiring! that I folded to my bleeding heart in the agony of eternal ſeparation!"—

"Come away, Sir, come away," cried Dr. Lyſter, who now ſaw that Cecilia was greatly agitated, "I will not be anſwerable for the continuation of this ſcene;" and taking him by the arm, he awakened him from his frantic rapture, by aſſuring him ſhe would faint, and forced him away from her.

Soon after he was gone, and Cecilia became more tranquil, Henrietta, who had wept with bitterneſs in a corner of the room during this ſcene,

ſcene, approached her, and, with an attempted ſmile, though in a voice hardly audible, ſaid, "Ah, Miſs Beverley, you will, at laſt, then be happy! happy as all your goodneſs deſerves. And I am ſure I ſhould rejoice in it if I was to die to make you happier!"

Cecilia, who but too well knew her full meaning, tenderly embraced her, but was prevented by Dr. Lyſter from entering into any diſcourſe with her.

The firſt meeting, however, with Delvile being over, the ſecond was far more quiet, and in a very ſhort time, he would ſcarcely quit her a moment, Cecilia herſelf receiving from his ſight a pleaſure too great for denial, yet too ſerene for danger.

The worthy Dr. Lyſter, finding her proſpect of recovery thus fair, prepared for leaving London: but, equally deſirous to do good out of his profeſſion as in it, he firſt, at the requeſt of Delvile, waited upon his father, to acquaint him with his preſent ſituation, ſolicit his directions for his future proceedings, and endeavour to negociate a general reconciliation.

Mr. Delvile, to whoſe proud heart ſocial joy could find no avenue, was yet touched moſt ſenſibly by the reſtoration of Cecilia. Neither his dignity nor his diſpleaſure had been able to repreſs remorſe, a feeling to which, with all his foibles, he had not been accuſtomed. The view of her diſtraction had dwelt upon his imagination, the deſpondency of his ſon had ſtruck him

with fear and horror. He had been haunted by ſelf-reproach, and purſued by vain regret; and thoſe conceſſions he had refuſed to tenderneſs and entreaty, he now willingly accorded to change repentance for tranquillity. He ſent inſtantly for his ſon, whom even with tears he embraced, and felt his own peace reſtored as he pronounced his forgiveneſs.

New, however, to kindneſs, he retained it not long, and a ſtranger to generoſity, he knew not how to make her welcome: the extinction of his remorſe abated his compaſſion for Cecilia, and when ſolicited to receive her, he revived the charges of Mr. Monckton.

Cecilia, informed of this, determined to write to that gentleman herſelf, whoſe long and painful illneſs, joined to his irrecoverable loſs of her, ſhe now hoped might prevail with him to make reparation for the injuries he had done her.

To Mr. Monckton.

I write not, Sir, to upbraid you; the woes which have followed your ill offices, and which you may ſome time hear, will render my reproaches ſuperfluous. I write but to beſeech that what is paſt may content you; and that, however, while I was ſingle, you choſe to miſrepreſent me to the Delvile family, you will have ſo much honour, ſince I am now

now become one of it, as to acknowledge my innocence of the crimes laid to my charge.

In remembrance of my former long friendſhip, I ſend you my good wiſhes; and in conſideration of my hopes from your recantation, I ſend you, Sir, if you think it worth acceptance, my forgiveneſs.

CECILIA DELVILE.

Mr. Monckton, after many long and painful ſtruggles between uſeleſs rage, and involuntary remorſe, at length ſent the following anſwer.

To Mrs. MORTIMER DELVILE.

Thoſe who could ever believe you guilty, muſt have been eager to think you ſo. I meant but your welfare at all times, and to have ſaved you from a connection I never thought equal to your merit. I am grieved, but not ſurpriſed, to hear of your injuries; from the alliance you have formed, nothing elſe could be expected: if my teſtimony to your innocence can, however, ſerve to mitigate them, I ſcruple not to declare I believe it without taint.

Delvile ſent by Dr. Lyſter this letter to his father, whoſe rage at the detection of the perfidy which had deceived him, was yet inferior

to

to what he felt that his family was mentioned ſo injurioufly.

His conference with Dr. Lyſter was long and painful, but deciſive: that ſagacious and friendly man knew well how to work upon his paſſions, and ſo effectually awakened them by repreſenting the diſgrace of his own family from the preſent ſituation of Cecilia, that before he quitted his houſe, he was authoriſed to invite her to remove to it.

When he returned from his embaſſy, he found Delvile in her room, and each waiting with impatience the event of his negociation.

The Doctor with much alacrity gave Cecilia the invitation with which he had been charged; but Delvile, jealous for her dignity, was angry and diſſatisfied his father brought it not himſelf, and exclaimed, with much mortification, "Is this all the grace accorded me?"

"Patience, patience, Sir," anſwered the Doctor; "when you have thwarted any body in their firſt hope and ambition, do you expect they will ſend you their compliments and many thanks for the diſappointment? Pray let the good gentleman have his way in ſome little matters, ſince you have taken ſuch effectual care to put out of his reach the power of having it in greater."

"O, far from ſtarting obſtacles," cried Cecilia, "let us ſolicit a reconciliation with whatever

ever conceſſions he may require. The miſery of DISOBEDIENCE we have but too fatally experienced; and thinking as we think of filial ties and parental claims, how can we ever hope happineſs till forgiven and taken into favour?"

"True, my Cecilia," anſwered Delvile, "and generous and condeſcending as true; and if *you* can thus ſweetly comply, I will gratefully forbear making any oppoſition. Too much already have you ſuffered from the impetuoſity of my temper, but I will try to curb it in future by the remembrance of your injuries."

"The whole of this unfortunate buſineſs," ſaid Dr. Lyſter, "has been the reſult of PRIDE and PREJUDICE. Your uncle, the Dean, began it, by his arbitrary will, as if an ordinance of his own could arreſt the courſe of nature! and as if *he* had power to keep alive, by the loan of a name, a family in the male branch already extinct. Your father, Mr. Mortimer, continued it with the ſame ſelf-partiality, preferring the wretched gratification of tickling his ear with a favourite ſound, to the ſolid happineſs of his ſon with a rich and deſerving wife. Yet this, however, remember; if to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you owe your miſeries, ſo wonderfully is good and evil balanced, that to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you will alſo owe their termination: for all that I could ſay

to

to Mr. Delvile, either of reaſoning or entreaty, — and I ſaid all I could ſuggeſt, and I ſuggeſted all a man need wiſh to hear, — was totally thrown away, till I pointed out to him his *own* diſgrace, in having a *daughter-in-law* immured in theſe mean lodgings!

"Thus, my dear young lady, the terror which drove you to this houſe, and the ſufferings which have confined you in it, will prove, in the event, the ſource of your future peace: for when all my beſt rhetoric failed to melt Mr. Delvile, I inſtantly brought him to terms by coupling his name with a pawnbroker's! And he could not with more diſguſt hear his ſon called Mr. Beverley, than think of his ſon's wife when he hears of the *Three Blue Balls!* Thus the ſame paſſions, taking but different directions, *do* miſchief and *cure* it alternately.

"Such, my good young friends, is the MORAL of your calamities. You have all, in my opinion, been ſtrangely at croſs-purpoſes, and trifled, no one knows why, with the firſt bleſſings of life. My only hope is that now, having among you thrown away its luxuries, you will have known enough of miſery to be glad to keep its neceſſaries."

This excellent man was yet prevailed upon by Delvile to ſtay and aſſiſt in removing the feeble Cecilia to St. James's-Square.

Henrietta, for whom Mr. Arnott's equipage and ſervants had ſtill remained in town, was

was then, though with much difficulty, perſuaded to go back to Suffolk: but Cecilia, however fond of her ſociety, was too ſenſible of the danger and impropriety of her preſent ſituation, to receive from it any pleaſure.

Mr. Delvile's reception of Cecilia was formal and cold: yet, as ſhe now appeared publicly in the character of his ſon's wife, the beſt apartment in his houſe had been prepared for her uſe, his domeſtics were inſtructed to wait upon her with the utmoſt reſpect, and Lady Honoria Pemberton, who was accidentally in town, offered from curioſity, what Mr. Delvile accepted from parade, to be herſelf in St. James's-Square, in order to do honour to his daughter-in-law's firſt entrance.

When Cecilia was a little recovered from the ſhock of the firſt interview, and the fatigue of her removal, the anxious Mortimer would inſtantly have had her conveyed to her own apartment; but, willing to exert herſelf, and hoping to oblige Mr. Delvile, ſhe declared ſhe was well able to remain ſome time longer in the drawing-room.

"My good friends," ſaid Dr. Lyſter, "in the courſe of my long practice, I have found it impoſſible to ſtudy the human frame, without a little ſtudying the human mind; and from all that I have yet been able to make out, either by obſervation, reflection, or compariſon, it appears to me at this moment, that Mr.

Mr. Mortimer Delvile has got the beſt wife, and that you, Sir, have here the moſt faultleſs daughter-in-law, that any huſband or any father in the three kingdoms belonging to his Majeſty can either have or deſire."

Cecilia ſmiled; Mortimer looked his delighted concurrence; Mr. Delvile forced himſelf to make a ſtiff inclination of the head; and Lady Honoria gaily exclaimed, "Dr. Lyſter, when you ſay the *beſt* and the moſt *faultleſs*, you ſhould always add, the reſt of the company excepted."

"Upon my word," cried the Doctor, "I beg your ladyſhip's pardon; but there is a certain unguarded warmth comes acroſs a man now and then, that drives *etiquette* out of his head, and makes him ſpeak truth before he well knows where he is."

"O, terrible!" cried ſhe, "this is ſinking deeper and deeper. I had hoped the town air would have taught you better things; but I find you have viſited at Delvile Caſtle till you are fit for no other place."

"Whoever, Lady Honoria," ſaid Mr. Delvile, much offended, "is fit for Delvile Caſtle, muſt be fit for *every* other place; though every other place may by no means be fit for him."

"O, yes, Sir," cried ſhe giddily, "every poſſible place will be fit for him, if he can once bear with that. Don't you think ſo, Dr. Lyſter?"

"Why,

"Why, when a man has the honour to ſee your ladyſhip," anſwered he, good humouredly, "he is apt to think too much of the perſon, to care about the place."

"Come, I begin to have ſome hopes of you," cried ſhe, "for I ſee, for a Doctor, you have really a very pretty notion of a compliment: only you have one great fault ſtill; you look the whole time as if you ſaid it for a joke."

"Why, in fact, madam, when a man has been a plain dealer both in word and look for upwards of fifty years, 'tis expecting too quick a reformation to demand ductility of voice and eye from him at a blow. However, give me but a little time and a little encouragement, and, with ſuch a tutreſs, 'twill be hard if I do not, in a very few leſſons, learn the right method of ſeaſoning a ſimper, and the neweſt faſhion of twiſting words from meaning."

"But pray," cried ſhe, "upon thoſe occaſions, always remember to look ſerious. Nothing ſets off a compliment ſo much as a long face. If you are tempted to an unſeaſonable laugh, think of Delvile Caſtle; 'tis an expedient I commonly make uſe of myſelf when I am afraid of being too friſky: and it always ſucceeds, for the very recollection of it gives me the head-ache in a moment. Upon my word, Mr. Delvile, you muſt have the conſtitution of five men, to have kept ſuch good health, after living ſo long at that horrible place. You can't imagine how you've ſurpriſed me, for I have regularly

regularly expected to hear of your death at the end of every ſummer; and, I aſſure you, once I was very near buying mourning."

"The eſtate which deſcends to a man from his own anceſtors, Lady Honoria," anſwered Mr. Delvile, "will ſeldom be apt to injure his health, if he is conſcious of committing no miſdemeanour which has degraded their memory."

"How vaſtly odious this new father of yours is! ſaid Lady Honoria, in a whiſper to Cecilia; "what could ever induce you to give up your charming eſtate for the ſake of coming into his fuſty old family! I would really adviſe you to have your marriage annulled. You have only, you know, to take an oath that you were forcibly run away with; and as you are an heireſs, and the Delviles are all ſo violent, it will eaſily be credited. And then, as ſoon as you are at liberty, I would adviſe you to marry my little Lord Derford."

"Would you only, then," ſaid Cecilia, "have me regain my freedom in order to part with it?"

"Certainly," anſwered Lady Honoria, "for you can do nothing at all without being married; a ſingle woman is a thouſand times more ſhackled than a wife; for, ſhe is accountable to every body; and a wife, you know, has nothing to do but juſt to manage her huſband."

"And

"And that," ſaid Cecilia, ſmiling, "you conſider as a trifle?"

"Yes, if you do but marry a man you don't care for."

"You are right, then, indeed, to recommend to me my Lord Derford!"

"O, yes, he will make the prettieſt huſband in the world; you may fly about yourſelf as wild as a lark, and keep him the whole time as tame as a jack-daw; and though he may complain of you to your friends, he will never have the courage to find fault to your face. But as to Mortimer, you will not be able to govern him as long as you live; for the moment you have put him upon the fret, you'll fall into the dumps yourſelf, hold out your hand to him, and, loſing the opportunity of gaining ſome material point, make up at the firſt ſoft word."

"You think, then, the quarrel more amuſing than the reconciliation?"

"O, a thouſand times! for while you are quarrelling, you may ſay any thing, and demand any thing, but when you are reconciled, you ought to behave pretty, and ſeem contented."

Thoſe who preſume to have any pretenſions to your ladyſhip," ſaid Cecilia, "would be made happy indeed ſhould they hear your principles!"

"O,

"O, it would not ſignify at all," anſwered ſhe, "for one's fathers, and uncles, and thoſe ſort of people, always make connections for one, and not a creature thinks of our principles, till they find them out by our conduct: and nobody can poſſibly do that till we are married, for they give us no power beforehand. The men know nothing of us in the world while we are ſingle, but how we can dance a minuet, or play a leſſon upon the harpſichord."

"And what elſe," ſaid Mr. Delvile, who advanced, and heard this laſt ſpeech, "need a young lady of rank deſire to be known for? your ladyſhip ſurely would not have her degrade herſelf by ſtudying like an artiſt or profeſſor?"

"O, no, Sir, I would not have her ſtudy at all; its mighty well for children, but really after ſixteen, and when one is come out, one has quite fatigue enough in dreſſing, and going to public places, and ordering new things, without all that torment of firſt and ſecond poſition, and E upon the firſt line, and F upon the firſt ſpace!"

"Your ladyſhip muſt, however, pardon me for hinting," ſaid Mr. Delvile, "that a young lady of condition, who has a proper ſenſe of her dignity, cannot be ſeen too rarely, or known too little."

"O, but I hate dignity!" cried ſhe, careleſsly, "for its the dulleſt thing in the world.

I al-

I always thought it was owing to that you were ſo little amuſing;—really I beg your pardon, Sir, I meant to ſay, ſo little talkative."

"I can eaſily credit that your ladyſhip ſpoke haſtily," anſwered he, highly piqued, "for I believe, indeed, a perſon of family ſuch as mine, will hardly be ſuppoſed to have come into the world for the office of amuſing it!"

"O, no, Sir," cried ſhe, with pretended innocence, "nobody, I am ſure, ever ſaw you with ſuch a thought." Then, turning to Cecilia, ſhe added in a whiſper, "You cannot imagine, my dear Mrs. Mortimer, how I deteſt this old couſin of mine! Now pray tell me honeſtly if you don't hate him yourſelf?"

"I hope," ſaid Cecilia, "to have no reaſon."

"Lord, how you are always upon your guard! If I were half as cautious, I ſhould die of the vapours in a month; the only thing that keeps me at all alive, is now and then making people angry; for the folks at our houſe let me go out ſo ſeldom, and then ſend me with ſuch ſtupid old chaperons, that giving them a little torment is really the only entertainment I can procure myſelf. O—but I had almoſt forgot to tell you a moſt delightful thing!"

"What is it?"

"Why

"Why you muſt know I have the greateſt hopes in the world that my father will quarrel with old Mr. Delvile!"

"And is that ſuch a delightful thing!"

"O, yes; I have lived upon the very idea this fortnight; for then, you know, they'll both be in a paſſion, and I ſhall ſee which of them looks frightfulleſt."

"When Lady Honoria whiſpers," cried Mortimer, "I always ſuſpect ſome miſchief."

"No, indeed," anſwered her ladyſhip, "I was merely congratulating Mrs. Mortimer about her marriage. Though really, upon ſecond thoughts, I don't know whether I ſhould not rather condole with her, for I have long been convinced ſhe has a prodigious antipathy to you. I ſaw it the whole time I was at Delvile Caſtle, where ſhe uſed to change colour at the very ſound of your name; a ſymptom I never perceived when I talked to her of my Lord Derford, who would certainly have made her a thouſand times a better huſband."

"If you mean on account of his title, Lady Honoria," ſaid Mr. Delvile: "your ladyſhip muſt be ſtrangely forgetful of the connections of your family, not to remember that Mortimer, after the death of his uncle and myſelf, muſt inevitably inherit one far more honourable than a new-ſprung-

up

up family, like my Lord Ernolf's, could offer."

"Yes, Sir; but then, you know, ſhe would have kept her eſtate, which would have been a vaſtly better thing than an old pedigree of new relations. Beſides, I don't find that any body cares for the noble blood of the Delviles but themſelves; and if ſhe had kept her fortune, every body, I fancy, would have cared for *that*."

"Every body, then," ſaid Mr. Delvile, "muſt be highly mercenary and ignoble, or the blood of an ancient and honourable houſe, would be thought contaminated by the moſt diſtant hint of ſo degrading a compariſon."

"Dear Sir, what ſhould we all do with birth if it was not for wealth? it would neither take us to Ranelagh nor the Opera; nor buy us caps nor wigs, nor ſupply us with dinners nor bouquets."

"Caps and wigs, dinners and bouquets!" interrupted Mr. Delvile; "your ladyſhip's eſtimate of wealth is really extremely minute."

"Why, you know, Sir, as to caps and wigs, they are very ſerious things, for we ſhould look mighty droll figures to go about bare-headed; and as to dinners, how would the Delviles have laſted all theſe thouſand centuries if they had diſdained eating them?"

"Whatever may be your ladyſhip's ſatisfaction," ſaid Mr. Delvile, angrily, "in depreciating a houſe that has the honour of being nearly allied with your own, you will not, I hope at leaſt, inſtruct this lady," turning to Cecilia, "to adopt a ſimilar contempt of its antiquity and dignity."

"This lady," cried Mortimer, "will at leaſt, by condeſcending to become one of it, ſecure us from any danger that ſuch contempt may ſpread further."

"Let me but," ſaid Cecilia, looking gratefully at him, "be as ſecure from exciting as I am from feeling contempt, and what can I have to wiſh?"

"Good and excellent young lady!" ſaid Dr. Lyſter, "the firſt of bleſſings indeed is yours in the temperance of your own mind. When you began your career in life, you appeared to us ſhort ſighted mortals, to poſſeſs more than your ſhare of the good things of this world; ſuch a union of riches, beauty, independence, talents, education, and virtue, ſeemed a monopoly to raiſe general envy and diſcontent; but mark with what ſcrupulous exactneſs the good and bad is ever balanced! You have had a thouſand ſorrows to which thoſe who have looked up to you have been ſtrangers, and for which not all the advantages you poſſeſs have been equivalent. There is evidently throughout this world, in things as well as perſons, a levelling principle, at war

war with pre-eminence, and deſtructive of perfection."

"Ah!" cried Mortimer, in a low voice to Cecilia, how much higher muſt we all riſe, or how much lower muſt you fall, ere any levelling principle will approximate us with YOU!"

He then entreated her to ſpare her ſtrength and ſpirits by removing to her own apartment, and the converſation was broken up.

"Pray permit me, Mrs. Mortimer," cried Lady Honoria, in taking leave, "to beg that the firſt gueſt you invite to Delvile Caſtle may be me. You know my partiality to it already. I ſhall be particularly happy in waiting upon you in tempeſtuous weather! We can all ſtroll out together, you know, very ſociably; and I ſha'n't be much in your way, for if there ſhould happen to be a ſtorm, you can eaſily lodge me under ſome great tree, and while you amuſe yourſelves with a tête-à-tête, give me the indulgence of my own reflections. I am vaſtly fond of thinking, and being alone, you know,—eſpecially in thunder and lightning!"

She then ran away; and they all ſeparated: Cecilia was conveyed up ſtairs, and the worthy Dr. Lyſter, loaded with acknowledgments of every kind, ſet out for the country.

Cecilia, ſtill weak, and much emaciated, for ſome time lived almoſt wholly in her

own room; where the grateful and ſolicitous attendance of Mortimer, alleviated the pain both of her illneſs and confinement: but as ſoon as her health permitted travelling, he haſtened with her abroad.

Here tranquillity once more made its abode in the heart of Cecilia; that heart ſo long torn with anguiſh, ſuſpenſe, and horror! Mrs. Delvile received her with the moſt rapturous fondneſs, and the impreſſion of her ſorrows gradually wore away, from her kind and maternal cares, and from the watchful affection and delighted tenderneſs of her ſon.

The Eggleſtons now took entire poſſeſſion of her eſtate, and Delvile, at her entreaty, forbore ſhewing any perſonal reſentment of their conduct, and put into the hands of a lawyer the arrangement of the affair.

They continued abroad ſome months, and the health of Mrs. Delvile was tolerably reeſtabliſhed. They were then ſummoned home by the death of Lord Delvile, who bequeathed to his nephew Mortimer his town houſe, and whatever of his eſtate was not annexed to his title, which neceſſarily devolved to his brother.

The ſiſter of Mrs. Delvile, a woman of high ſpirit and ſtrong paſſions, lived not long after him: but having, in her latter days, intimately connected herſelf with Cecilia, ſhe was ſo much charmed with her character, and ſo much dazzled by her admiration of the extraordinary

traordinary ſacrifice ſhe had made, that, in a fit of ſudden enthuſiaſm, ſhe altered her will, to leave to her, and to her ſole diſpoſal, the fortune which, almoſt from his infancy, ſhe had deſtined for her nephew. Cecilia, aſtoniſhed and penetrated, oppoſed the alteration; but even her ſiſter, now Lady Delvile, to whom ſhe daily became dearer, earneſtly ſupported it; while Mortimer, delighted to reſtore to her through his own family, any part of that power and independence of which her generous and pure regard for himſelf had deprived her, was abſolute in refuſing that the deed ſhould be revoked.

Cecilia, from this flattering tranſaction, received a farther conviction of the malignant falſehood of Mr. Monckton, who had always repreſented to her the whole of the Delvile family as equally poor in their circumſtances, and illiberal in their minds. The ſtrong ſpirit of active benevolence which had ever marked her character, was now again diſplayed, though no longer, as hitherto, unbounded. She had learnt the error of profuſion, even in charity and beneficence; and ſhe had a motive for œconomy, in her animated affection for Mortimer.

She ſoon ſent for Albany, whoſe ſurpriſe that ſhe ſtill exiſted, and whoſe rapture at her recovered proſperity, now threatened his ſenſes from the tumult of his joy, with nearly the ſame danger they had lately been menaced by

terror. But though her donations were circumſcribed by prudence, and their objects were ſelected with diſcrimination, ſhe gave to herſelf all her former benevolent pleaſure, in ſolacing his afflictions, while ſhe ſoftened his aſperity, by reſtoring to him his favourite office of being her almoner and monitor.

She next ſent to her own penſioners, relieved thoſe diſtreſſes which her ſudden abſence had occaſioned, and renewed and continued the ſalaries ſhe had allowed them. All who had nouriſhed reaſonable expectations from her bounty ſhe remembered, though ſhe raiſed no new claimants but with œconomy and circumſpection. But neither Albany nor the old penſioners felt the ſatisfaction of Mortimer, who ſaw with new wonder the virtues of her mind, and whoſe admiration of her excellencies, made his gratitude perpetual for the happineſs of his lot.

The tender-hearted Henrietta, in returning to her new friends, gave way, with artleſs openneſs, to the violence of untamed grief; but finding Mr. Arnott as wretched as herſelf, the ſympathy Cecilia had foreſeen ſoon endeared them to each other, while the little intereſt taken in either by Mrs. Harrel, made them almoſt inſeparable companions.

Mrs. Harrel, wearied by their melancholy, and ſick of retirement, took the earlieſt opportunity that was offered her of changing her ſituation; ſhe married very ſoon a man of fortune

tune in the neighbourhood, and, quickly forgetting all the paſt, thoughtleſsly began the world again, with new hopes, new connections,—new equipages, and new engagements!

Henrietta was then obliged to go again to her mother, where, though deprived of all the indulgencies to which ſhe was now become familiar, ſhe was not more hurt by the ſeparation than Mr. Arnott. So ſad and ſo ſolitary his houſe ſeemed in her abſence, that he ſoon followed her to town, and returned not till he carried her back its miſtreſs. And there the gentle gratitude of her ſoft and feeling heart, engaged from the worthy Mr. Arnott the tendereſt affection, and, in time, healed the wound of his early and hopeleſs paſſion.

The injudicious, the volatile, yet noble-minded Belfield, to whoſe mutable and enterpriſing diſpoſition life ſeemed always rather beginning than progreſſive, roved from employment to employment, and from public life to retirement, ſoured with the world, and diſcontented with himſelf, till vanquiſhed, at length, by the conſtant friendſhip of Delvile, he conſented to accept his good offices in again entering the army; and, being fortunately ordered out upon foreign ſervice, his hopes were revived by ambition, and his proſpects were brightened by a view of future honour.

The wretched Monckton, dupe of his own cunning and artifices, ſtill lived in lingering miſery, doubtful which was moſt acute, the pain

pain of his wound and confinement, or of his defeat and diſappointment. Led on by a vain belief that he had parts to conquer all difficulties, he had indulged without reſtraint a paſſion in which intereſt was ſeconded by inclination. Allured by ſuch faſcinating powers, he ſhortly ſuffered nothing to ſtop his courſe; and though when he began his career he would have ſtarted at the mention of actual diſhonour, long before it was concluded, neither treachery nor perjury were regarded by him as ſtumbling blocks. All fear of failing was loſt in vanity, all ſenſe of probity was ſunk in intereſt, all ſcruples of conſcience were left behind by the heat of the chace. Yet the unforeſeen and melancholy cataſtrophe of his long arts, illuſtrated in his deſpite what his principles had obſcured, that even in worldly purſuits, where fraud outruns integrity, failure joins diſhonour to loſs, and diſappointment excites triumph inſtead of pity.

The upright mind of Cecilia, her purity, her virtue, and the moderation of her wiſhes, gave to her in the warm affection of Lady Delvile, and the unremitting fondneſs of Mortimer, all the happineſs human life ſeems capable of receiving:—yet human it was, and as ſuch imperfect! ſhe knew that, at times, the whole family muſt murmur at her loſs of fortune, and at times ſhe murmured herſelf to be thus portionleſs, though an HEIRESS.

Rationally,

Rationally, however, ſhe ſurveyed the world at large, and finding that of the few who had any happineſs, there was none without ſome miſery, ſhe checked the riſing ſigh of repining mortality, and, grateful with general felicity, bore partial evil with chearfulleſt reſignation!

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